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60th year of publication

## WCC Assembly addresses world transformation

Harry der Nederlanden

Ecumenically speaking, our mainline churches, or denominations, seem to be headed in two directions at the same time. The World Council of Churches has been working hard to draw Evangelical and Pentecostal churches into its orbit while also courting the Roman Catholic Church and thus extending its scope well beyond the familiar grouping of mainline denominations that have historically participated there. At the same time, most of the churches identified with the WCC are threatened by division: like the Anglican communion, they are threatened by rupture from within over issues of sexuality.

Over the last decade, like some other ecumenical organizations, the WCC has been casting desperately about for a new identity and strategy, for lack of funding has forced it to downsize dramatically. Financial problems did not, however, prevent the meeting of its 9th Assembly in Porto Allegre, Brazil from Feb. 14 to 23. The Assembly drew some 4,000 delegates from about 340 member churches as well as observers from the Catholic Church and other denominations. The theme of this year's Assembly, held every seven years, was "God in your grace, transform the world."

The moderator of this Assembly, Catholicos Aram of the Armenian Apostolic Church, addressed the theme on the first day of the meeting. He pointed out that "all political, religious, economic, ideological and technological attempts [to transform the world] have failed."

He described globalization as such an aggressive attempt at transformation. And he lauded the growth of "non-institutional churches and charismatic movements, especially in Latin America,



Several different liturgies were used during the assembly worship.

praising their innovations and their rejection of tradition.

Quite a number of the speakers that addressed various segments of the Assembly took the occasion to lambast globalization and its primary agent – the U.S.A. An economist [see last issue of CC] told the gathering that "poverty doesn't just exist – it is manufactured by those who control the markets." He denied that it is a natural phenomenon, declaring it to be "the fruit of deliberate policy."

One wonders what caused poverty and hunger before globalization. The World Council of Churches has set forth its alternative to globalization in a document called ACAPE (Alternative Globalization Addressing People and Earth). It outlines a comprehensive plan for the eradication of poverty from the face of the earth, challenging "the logic of globalization." It condemns the free market as a myth and tackles the transformation of "the whole edifice of global production and exchange."

That is quite an ambitious

recipe. How does that accord with Aram's rejection of such totalistic interventions? While many in the Evangelical camp tout the free market as an antidote to central planning and statism, mainline clerics denounce the free market as the most invasive intervention in the lives of people.

Yashpal Tandon, executive

director of the South Centre of the WCC, told the Assembly, "Capitalism is based on competition and greed, and structurally negates cooperation." He admitted that socialism, though based on cooperation, has not always worked. But he pointed to local cooperative projects like Focolare and the project of the International Labour organization, which reinvest profits to help the poor.

A number of Latin American leaders denounced the Bush

administration for relying on domination and violence to achieve its ends. Along with the military and economic domination of Latin America by the U.S., they also cited its cultural domination via Hollywood.

"All mechanisms of domination come from the U.S. The U.S. is not good for us," said Perez



March for Peace with Adolfo Esquivel and Desmond Tutu

Adolfo Esquivel, an Argentinian Nobel Prize laureate. The victory of left-wing leaders in Venezuela, Bolivia, Chile and Brazil, however, were celebrated as signs of hope that transformation is coming.

WCC General Secretary Samuel Kobia told the Assembly that climate change represents one of the most dire threats to humanity, and he appealed to the churches to alert political leaders. He seemed to have the impression that some of them had not yet heard it from other sources.

Kobia suggested that if all churches joined together, "we can prevent climate change." He credited the WCC for putting the climate change issue before the U.N.

Hope Antone, of the Christian Conference of Asia, told delegates that Asian church leaders are shedding the "colonial legacy" of converting other people to Christianity. In its place they are putting new forms of interfaith dialogue, she said, and urged Christians "to deal first with our own personal prejudices, because we have to check our desires to 'convert' others." This desire is part of the colonial legacy. Her guiding motto, she said, is this: "To be Asian is to be inter-religious." This seems to imply that those still committed to missions in the old style thereby relinquish their Asian identity – a dangerous motto.

She expressed delight at being able to join with Muslims and those of other faiths in resisting "the impact of market-oriented globalization and the war on terrorism."

Rev. Heidi Hadsell, president of Hartford Seminary, chimed in with Antone's rejection of old-style missions, and she described sending students abroad "not to convert, but to promote dialogue."

Continued on page 2...

## News

WCC Assembly *continued*

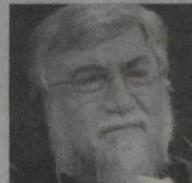
The Assembly issued a statement deplored the Danish cartoons, calling them a "misuse of the right to freedom of speech." It urged its member churches "to express and demonstrate solidarity with those who are experiencing attacks on their religions and join them in defending the integrity of their faith by non-violent means." One wonders how such statements are heard by Christians in countries like Nigeria: are they being urged to support Muslim law (sharia), since this is central to the integrity of the faith of Islam?

The statement went on to say that the violent reaction to the cartoons did not just spring from religious differences: "Failure to find a just and peaceful solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, reluctance to accept outcomes of free elections [an allusion to the Hamas victory in Palestine], together with the war on Iraq and the war in Afghanistan add frustration to historical experiences marked by crusades and colonialism." An organization that wants to celebrate all religions as peace-loving is quite naturally reluctant to admit that religious differences between Christianity and Islam might cause friction; the sources of conflict must be found elsewhere. Perhaps the cartoons reminded Muslims of the Crusades....

Addressing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, Kobia suggested that South Africa be put in charge of countering the spread of nuclear arms, for although it has the means to build them, it has renounced nuclear weapons. He called the acquisition by more countries of nuclear capability frightening, and he went on the condemn as scandalous the refusal of "countries which possess vast arsenals of nuclear weapons to renounce their use."

A group of church leaders representing the organization's U.S. conference read a letter denouncing their government's "imperial projects" as "nothing short of idolatry." The U.S. has reacted to 9-11, they said, "by seeking to reclaim a privileged and secure place in the world, raining down terror on the truly vulnerable among our global neighbors."

It was composed as a statement of repentance: those who drafted the letter confessed thereby their failure to raise a loud enough prophetic voice to alter government policy. The right-wing Institute on Religion and Democracy challenged the authenticity of the gesture, calling it a false act of



The moderator, Catholicos Aram of the Armenian Apostolic Church



Cardinal Kaspar was present as an observer for the Catholic Church

penitence. "The church leaders are not confessing their own sins; they are trying to confess the sins of George W. Bush...."

The Assembly heard that the income and reserves of the WCC have declined by 30 percent since

its last meeting. Although more churches have been making contributions, less has been coming from primary supporters such as the German churches, which have been contributing 40 percent of the budget. In 2002 and 2003 the organization was forced to make drastic staff reductions. The budget for this Assembly was projected to be half of that of the previous Assembly.

Looking ahead, Kobia proposed that for the next Assembly the WCC invite the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Lutheran World Federation in joint meetings of their governing bodies. Leaders of both bodies welcomed the proposal. Both also have their headquarters in Geneva, and both have also been feeling a financial pinch



Catedral Mae de Deus, Porto Alegre

#### A personal note

*It is difficult to assess the character and tone of a long and large ecclesiastical assembly through news releases. By the time it was over, my file contained over 60 stories from primarily two sources – one the news agency of the WCC itself and the other a Methodist agency. But neither, of course, bothered to report on the Bible studies and worship events that are part of the Assembly. There are also numerous workshops that were not reported on, so this report, a condensation of reports made by others, cannot pretend to convey with any accuracy the tenor of the entire event.*

*The overall impression left by the articles I received was that the WCC seems largely devoted to mobilizing the churches to become NGOs to pressure their respective governments to adopt policies like those pressed by the World Social Forum. The enemy is globalization, closely identified with the free market and neo-liberalism, and its primary agent the U.S.A. Global corporations, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank all act as villains in this conspiracy story.*

*The sad thing is that there is enough truth to this story to make it convincing. But it is a largely made-in-the-West story, born of the West's critical self-reflection. Rather than being prophetic, it is simply one-sided. It does not sufficiently tell the truth of the complexity of our human-all-too-human attempts to reshape history, the economy, culture and political institutions. Every grand plan for world betterment has its unexpected side-effects and victims.*

*That I believe is what the moderator Aram warned about in his opening address, and that is what so many of the subsequent speakers and declarations seemed to forget.*

HdN

## Healthcare reform: high road or low road?

Harry der Nederlanden

In the first three months of this year three provinces have introduced health care reforms in response to the Supreme Court ruling that declared patients must be permitted recourse to private treatment if the public system is unable to provide it in a timely manner. Quebec, British Columbia and Alberta have all made room for a greater degree of private health care delivery.

The moves have been welcomed as a long-needed "health care revolution" (*The National Post*) and condemned as opening the door to two-tier health care (*The Toronto Star*). It is probably neither. As many have repeatedly pointed out, a large part of Canadian health care is already provided by private sources (and paid by public funds) and about 30 percent is still paid for out-of-pocket. And no total revolution is involved in providing some kinds of treatments and surgeries in private clinics, for they have existed in several provinces for a long time.

In mid-February Quebec promised it would provide hip and knee replacements and cataract surgery within 6 months. If the public system is unable to provide the service within that time limit, it will pay to have it done at private clinics. It also lifted the ban on private insurance for a specified number of treatments like joint replacement surgery.

The Quebec government said its model sought to preserve the public health care system while providing a role for the private sector to improve it.

Also in mid-February B.C. Premier Gordon Campbell called for "transformative change" in health care in his province, saying that on its present basis medicare is unsustainable. He toured Sweden, Norway, France and Britain to take a close look at private-public partnerships in those countries. Campbell asked, "Does it really matter to patients where or how they obtain their surgical treatment as long as it is paid for with public funds?"

In Alberta Premier Ralph Klein has long been trumpeting the advent of his Third Way. At last he made his proposals public. Many aspects of his program were well received. But it went well beyond the Quebec model. It would allow the public to pay for certain non-essential services themselves,



Ralph Klein

mentioning hips, knees, cataracts and hernias, but it would also allow physicians to work in both the public and private systems. In Quebec, a doctor would have to opt out of the public system in order to establish a private clinic.

An editorial in the *Globe and Mail* called the Alberta move "an astounding perversion." NDP leader called on Harper to put the kibosh on Klein's proposal, saying, "Canadians now believe as a fundamental value that you don't buy your way to the front of the line to get health care." He argued that it undermines the principle of equality.

Harper pledged to examine the Alberta plan carefully to see whether it violates the Canada Health Act, assuring Canadians and Albertans that his government is committed to the Act. He also expressed a preference for Quebec's "more moderate approach."

Health policy expert Charles Pascal, in the *Globe and Mail*, warned that the so-called reforms are a "tragedy in the making." Our leaders are losing sight of the vision of the Romanow Commission and permitting "commercial interests [to] invade the very heart of publicly funded medicare." He sees the Quebec strategy of introducing private care under the radar, allowing "profit-seeking companies to expand their reach" as potentially more of a threat than Klein's move, which he thinks will be disallowed. It is dangerous because it accepts health care as a commodity rather than as a right.

But it is a right that is also a very expensive commodity. The public does not have a right to things it cannot afford. As the premiers of all three provinces have pointed out, the ever rising costs of the present system are unsustainable, especially in view of the ageing baby-boomers.

Many more kinds of treatment technologies have become available as well as many more kinds of drugs. They provide undeniable improvements in health care, but

## Politics

# Political representation: conflicting visions

Last May there was a huge uproar over the defection of Belinda Stronach from the Conservative Party to the Liberal front benches, which occurred just in time to prop up Paul Martin's minority government for a few more months. Conservatives in particular were understandably livid at what they saw as a betrayal of major proportions.

Thus there was ambivalence amongst many of these same Conservatives when David Emerson, member of parliament for Vancouver Kingsway jumped ship last month to take up the Conservative government's international trade portfolio. Yes, he boosted the needed Conservative numbers in the House of Commons, but he also could be said to have spurned the voters in his own riding who had elected him as a Liberal only two weeks earlier. The ex-Reform Party populists in the new Conservative Party of Canada (CPC) were especially troubled by Emerson's action.

This underscores the potential for conflict amongst different visions of representation within our political system. What are

these visions?

First comes the representative as *trustee of the public interest*, often associated with the 18th century British statesman, Edmund Burke. In appealing to the voters to return him to office, Burke claimed that, as their representative, he owed them, not merely his industry, but his judgement as well. This was a nicer way of saying that he intended to do what he believed was in the best interest of the country as a whole and not necessarily to follow their wishes.

Second comes the representative as *delegate* or *agent*. An agent does the bidding of the people she undertakes to represent, much as a taxi driver simply takes passengers where they wish to go. In its pure form no genuine leadership is involved. The old Reform Party was founded on a populist vision in which MPs would vote on instruction from their constituents, especially in a free vote on controversial moral issues. After Stockwell Day's disastrous leadership of the Canadian Alliance, this populist

element has been downplayed in the CPC under Stephen Harper's leadership.

A third conception is that of the *micro-cosm*, in which the representative body becomes a cross section in miniature of the community being represented. The assumption here is that an urbanite best represent urbanites, a francophone francophones, and so forth. In Canada prime ministers generally try to make Cabinet as representative as possible of the diversity of the country. Expertise in a particular policy field is a very much secondary consideration, as is evident when a minister is moved from, say, Canadian Heritage to National Defence.

After winning his minority government, Stephen Harper was painfully aware that his Conservative caucus did not have a single member from the two major cities of Montréal and Vancouver. Thus it made sense to bring Michael Fortier and Emerson into his Cabinet, even if it meant appointing one to the Senate and encouraging the other

to defect. Had he not done so, there would have been complaints that his Cabinet was too western or too rural or too anglophone. Harper opted for one vision of representation, undoubtedly aware that in so doing he was bypassing the other visions and inadvertently stepping on people's toes.

So which vision is best? None, if taken in their pure form. In the real world we try to follow all of these at once, expecting our governments to strike a difficult balance in representing the citizens. Whatever Harper did in choosing his Cabinet would bring criticism from someone.

That said, in Emerson's case I think the right thing to do is to resign and stand again as a Conservative in a by-election.

David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario, and is the author of the award-winning Political Visions and Illusions (InterVarsity Press). His weblog can be found at: <http://byzantinecalvinist.blogspot.com/>.



## Principalities & Powers

David T. Koyzis

many of them are very pricey. Who decides which ones will be made available and who will get the treatments when the system can no longer pay for everything?

"In every rich country people are demanding too much of their health care systems," wrote Clive Crook in the March *Atlantic*. Everyone expects access to the latest technology and the latest drugs no matter what the cost.

An editorial in *The Star* correctly pointed out that the issue has been precipitated by inordinate wait times. If wait times were reasonable, no one would opt to pay for treatment or surgery out of their own pockets. But that, of course, assumes that the government is able to keep pouring ever more money into health care even as more treatments come available and as the public gets older. The issue is precisely that of limits.

University of Toronto Professor Coleen Flood, quoted in several articles, argued that countries that allow doctors to move between public and private systems, as the Alberta model proposes, have seen an increase in wait times. It stands to reason, she argued, for any treatment time devoted to the private system is taken out of the public system. Although this removes wealthy patients from the public waiting lines, it does not benefit the public as a whole. She points to countries like Britain and New Zealand for proof.

Nadeem Esmail of the Fraser Institute, a conservative thinktank,

denies that it is a zero-sum system. Private clinics would be a drain on the public system only if the latter were making full and efficient use of doctors' time and talents. This is not the case, according to Esmail and other critics. Some doctors are given access to an operating room only one day per week or less. Lysiane Gagnon, writing in the *Globe and Mail*, points out that often the rooms are used only 8 hours per day, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. In a private-public partnership such doctors would spend much more time in the operating room, thus adding to the system.

Esmail points out that "Canada is the only developed nation with a universal access health insurance program that does not allow private contracting for medically necessary treatment." In other democratic

countries like France and Sweden, doctors work for both the private and the public sector after first discharging a quota of duties in the public sector.

Discussions about other options such as user fees continue to be charged with ideology and emotion, making it difficult to judge whether statistics and examples are fairly presented or biased. Dr. Philippe Couillard, a physician and Quebec's health Minister said, "We have to open the debate and get away from rigid ideological positions where if you utter the word 'private,' people have seizures." At the same time, it is obvious that others seem to assume that private enterprise is the best answer to every solution.

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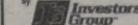


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## Editorial

# Light, camera, ecstasy

Harry der Nederlanden

I woke up early the first Sunday of March as the first light began filtering into the bedroom. Usually on Sunday mornings I'm awakened by music from the CBC as Rose turns on 94.1 FM in the hopes of hearing choir music. But this morning the house was quiet, because Rose was in Iowa visiting her mother in Rock Valley.

Hustling into my clothes without even showering, I considered and quickly rejected the idea of making a little coffee first. The sky looked almost cloudless. The air was crisp and clear, a few degrees below freezing. Perfect.

No, I wasn't eager to get to church. It was some three hours before church began. I was thinking of frozen waterfalls, ice, snow, rugged escarpment rocks and hard-frozen trails. Yes, by the time I got there, the light would be just right.

This past Christmas Rose and the kids bought me my first digital camera – a 4 megabit Canon Powershot A80. I took a few indoor photos around Christmas time, but it wasn't until I took the camera with me during a hike in Woods End that I really got excited. When I downloaded the images onto my computer and set them as wallpaper (for you computer novices: that's the picture that shows on the computer screen when you're not doing anything), I was blown away. Dazzled. Besotted.

Every so often I used to visit a website called Webshots to find a few nature photos, preferably from Alberta or Montana, so I have something to gaze at when my mind goes woozy or whirley. They quiet me down. But the pictures I'd taken myself had all those borrowed photographs beat by a country mile, no contest. Perhaps it was because they are of familiar places where Rose and I like to walk. Or perhaps I was just enthralled by my new-found talent as a nature photographer.

The first Sunday that Rose was away, I decided to take a longer hike to see if I could get a few more pictures for my computer. It was freezing cold and windy, but quite sunny. Due to the cold, my batteries gave out before my memory card was full. Just as well, perhaps, because I was about to lose some fingers to frostbite. Picture-snapping is cold work.

A digital camera is very liberating for a penny-pinching Dutchman. You don't have to worry about wasting expensive film or about the costs of developing. Whatever shots don't turn out, you simply erase. And quite a number didn't turn out. My hands got so cold, they began to shake, so some of the pictures were blurry. Or perhaps it was climbing up steep embankments to get a better shot that made me trembly. Sometimes, too, I

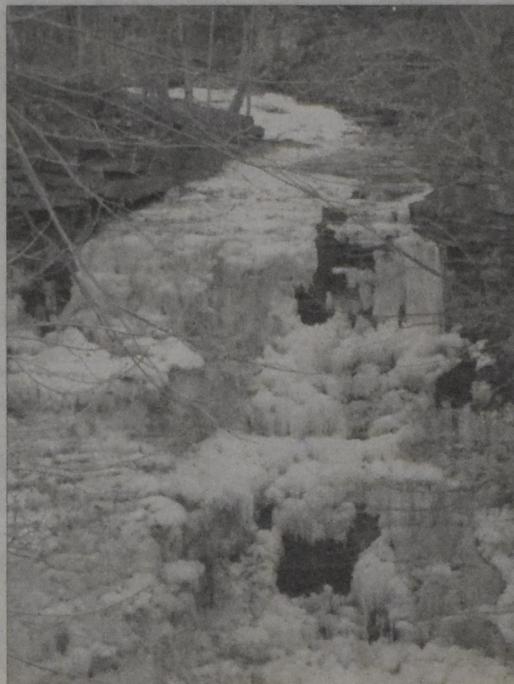


Photo taken from top of falls

was just in an all-fired hurry to get the shot before the sun disappeared behind a cloud. Lighting is everything.

After I got home, the pictures of the half-frozen creek winding through Short Hills that did turn out got me so excited, that I quickly replaced the frozen batteries and headed out once more. This time to Decew Falls. How long would these conditions last? Trails frozen hard so you didn't slip in the mud, lots of sun, crystal-clear air and hardly anyone else out in the woods to spoil the solitude.

In the end I spent over four hours in the quest for new pictures.

Before she stepped on the plane to Iowa, Rose issued a strong prohibition against starting any more home renovation projects. Actually, she calls them demolition projects. The house still hasn't recovered from the last time she went to Iowa. So I figured that constituted a license to launch my new hobby. I took my camera to work every day that week, and right after work I raced off to conquer new territories and record new beauties – from grasses fired by the setting sun to ice-fringed creeks and snow-encrusted rocks.

Twice I ventured out onto the ice overlooking a tall waterfall in Short Hills, but both times it was obscured in deep shadow. The only way to get a good shot of those frozen falls, I saw, was to come early in the morning when the sun was shining straight up the narrow gorge. The second Sunday, conditions were perfect.

Fresh snow had fallen two days earlier, adding extra texture to the scene. After taking three or four shots from above, however, the conviction grew in me that a shot from the foot of the falls would be far more impressive. Now that it was frozen solid, the creek formed a virtual sidewalk leading to the base of the falls. No, there weren't any footprints down there that I could see, but that didn't mean there was no way to get there.

About a half hour later I was standing at the foot of the falls looking up. Not just the face of the falls was ribbed and laced with ice, but the rocky walls on both sides of the falls were solid ice as well. Water from earlier thaws had oozed down the face of the escarpment and frozen there. I was standing in a crystal cathedral not made by human hands, and the early morning sun shone down the canyon

into the ice kindling pale blue and green highlights from deep within. All was sparkle and shine and glory hallelujah! I was the only one in the park, and the only sounds were the birds chirping and fluting a greeting to the rising sun and the muted burble of water beneath the ice. The dazzle of light reflecting off ice walls rising up some 80 feet around me infused such delight in me I was almost spinning and floating in ecstasy.

No, it was the lightness of gratitude that was making me giddy – gratitude for life, for another winter, for beauty, for the miraculousness of being, the being of ice, of snow, of rocks, of streams and of being in the midst of them, reflecting their radiances back to the heavens. Sometimes gratitude just spins off the surface of things as surely as photons and atoms. It vibrates all around. You can't help but vibrate in response.

I made it to church that morning with minutes to spare, but I had already heard the voice of the Creator. However, as I entered, I realized it was the first Sunday of Lent. George Langbroek's excruciating sculpture of the Crucified One shaped from nails rose ten feet tall beside the pulpit. And another metal sculpture of the crown of thorns was propped up nearby. What a jarring contrast. It was almost a physical blow.

Light and darkness. Dazzle and dim. Lightness and heaviness. Ecstasy of life, agony of death. From the boundless outdoors to the inner depths of soul. Click. One picture. Click. Another. Life's moments. Ever changing. An endless slide show recorded on the retinas of our eyes but moving us deeply within.

We are moved – by what encroaches on us all around us, by what happens to us, by what others do to us, by the institutions and traditions that shelter us more surely than trees, by the lights that pass before us on the screen and the sounds that fall upon our ears. We are recorders, imprinted with our own experience and the experiences of our parents and our forebears.

But God says to us Remember and rejoice. And suddenly, miraculously, we are no longer merely products of our environment and no longer passive receptors. Passivity passes through passion, through his passion.

The dark sluggishness that threatens to mire us down, dark as the darkest part of earth, heavy as the densest stone, rises up into the darkness of the cross. It is the darkness and gravity of courtrooms, judges, star chambers, war rooms that rises up into the tree on which he is impaled. It rises up and spreads across the sky in the darkness of judgment. Darkness and death swallow him up and swallow the entire earth.

That one tree exposes all the darkness, the tragic deadness and inertia that pulls us down more surely than gravity, more dreadfully than death and disease. From one angle, a central scene in what we are called to remember, life is a gaping tomb, a dark maw waiting to swallow us forever.

In all that brilliant dazzle of snow and ice out there at the foot of the falls, I forgot the dark, frozen earth beneath. The earth from whence I came and whither I shall return.

But – click – click – we are part of God's slide show. Our memory is not our own. We are given a divine memory of things born before time began, of things that happened centre stage in the middle of time on the tree, of things that are happening now because they come to us from the future in a lightstorm of endtime images.

God is light, said John. And he saw visions of a world in which night is no more. He saw cities of precious stone, of jasper and emerald, of topaz and amethyst and of gold as transparent as glass.

And all I saw was a frozen waterfall transfigured by the morning sun. But I saw that I was only beginning to understand his command to rejoice. I heard it speaking faintly in the waterfall.

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Editor: Harry der Nederlanden editor@christiancourier.ca  
Circulation: Rose der Nederlanden rose@christiancourier.ca  
Accounts/Advertising Manager: Ineke Medcalfe-Strayer  
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## Education/Spring

# When will Ontario treat all good schools fairly?

The renewed discussion regarding the pros and cons of extending appropriate government funding to the province's alternative and independent schools offers a timely opportunity for all interested citizens and politicians in sharing their respective views on this controversial issue well before the 2007 Ontario election.

Progressive Conservative Leader John Tory understandably re-launched the public debate at his party's recent policy conference. He asserted: "I am still completely and totally committed to ensuring that part of our platform for the 2007 election is a policy which addresses the fairness issue of independent schools. It's fair to say that the issue of fairness more starkly presents itself when you are dealing with faith-based schools as opposed to others." After reportedly visiting several such schools and listening to people of all kinds, he said: "I have come to understand even better the fact that there is a fairness issue that needs to be addressed."

In a provocative lead editorial, "Tory's plan hurts public education" (Feb. 22), the *Toronto Star* repeated its long-held

opposition to government subsidizing parents with children in "private" schools.

Indeed, our political parties and the Ontario voters should not "turn education into a political football." Instead, the *Star* and all others concerned about the future of Ontario education and the fair treatment of all bona fide alternative schools, both within and outside the two publicly funded systems, should advocate the consistent implementation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Our obligation to become more assertive and pro-active when it comes to advocating the constant protection of human rights and responsibilities, that involve the fundamental freedom of conscience and religion and the Charter right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination, is basic. Especially when viewed in the context of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states in Article 26 (III): "Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children."

In our multi-cultural, multi-faith country, we must advocate concrete support for an open democracy and a participatory society, based on public justice for all citizens and all credible institutions. This clearly requires the principled promotion and consistent practice of a non-discriminatory pluralism which recognizes legal equality and fair opportunity without discrimination because of creed, faith, ideology, religion or values.

Such authentic pluralism should be equitable and inclusive. It should include the public recognition that different people(s) and communities have different beliefs and values and have the legal right and freedom to live in different ways. All persons and all communities basically need a secure place to stand, public room to speak their minds, and social space to live out their respective faiths and values – including education. They are legally entitled and should be financially enabled to participate as equals in a free society and a non-majoritarian democracy.

Mutual respect and mutual responsibility would be the governing principle of a truly participatory, representative democracy.

This principle would involve free choice and fiscal equity for all parents and students and for all faith- and values-communities. Thus, all Ontario residents should certainly enjoy equal respect in education law and public policy. No group, no matter how powerful, should be favored at the expense of others.

The Ontario government has the constitutional duty to protect fully the fundamental human rights and educational responsibilities of all Ontarians – not only those of the two established major school systems, but also of the various minority communities such as the growing Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu and Protestant Christian education groups.

Perhaps the *Star* and other media should invite all concerned to participate in a pre-election series of articles and letters that explore effective ways in which neither "public" nor "private" education is turned into "a political football." We must rise above partisan politics and accept the crucial challenge of developing creative choices and policy options based on public justice for all, without discrimination.

Gerald Vandezande  
Scarborough, ON

## Tulips and hopes

### Didy Prinzen

It is that time of year again when my heart begins to get filled with anticipation. Now when the days are lengthening and the rays of the sun begin to warm and nurture the earth again, I think about the promise God made to Noah that

*as long as the earth endures  
seedtime and harvest,  
cold and heat,  
summer and winter,  
day and night,  
will never cease.*

Thinking of that promise, I step outside and because I feel already a hint of spring in the air I begin to look for the first signs of it in my garden. And as always my mind turns to tulips which to me are the first of God's messages of spring. I think that's why He has made them so stately, so royal.

I know that it will not be long before I begin scanning my flowerbeds daily for the first sign of those that I planted last fall. I can hardly wait, especially because of the huge disappointment I encountered last spring. Only a few bulbs came up of the dozens I planted.

I thought of several possibilities. Could it perhaps have been due to my late planting? I had planted them in early December and there were some patches of snow already on the ground. However, listening to a radio program on gardening I had heard someone who ought to know make the statement that it was never too late to plant tulip bulbs, even if it was Christmas.



But had they perhaps rotted in the ground? The holes in which I had planted them were wet and muddy. And I especially remembered that I *myself* had been freezing cold and that my spirit that day had been low.

Then I began to muse about my state of mind at the time of planting. I remembered planting them without much hope that they would grow – because of the mud, because of the cold and because of the lateness of the season in spite of what the expert said. I knew that if the tulips required a positive attitude from the gardener when planted, they would surely have failed.

But, I mused ... isn't planting a little bit like sending up prayers to our heavenly Father? Even though we sometimes plant prayers feeling downcast by life's experiences, we know that our prayers being heard and answered does not depend on our feelings and emotions....

Of course, I never did find out the real reason why my bulbs didn't mature. Just to be sure *last* fall I planted them early in the season on a sunny day and yes, even with

hope in my heart. With all the right elements in place I trust I will soon see them peek out of the ground, heralding the arrival of spring.

I will step outside every day and watch my tulips grow until they'll stand there, tall and proud in their colourful jackets – the first royal guests to arrive for a banquet. I will marvel at the miracle of those beautiful tulips rising out of dirt and dust by way of small mere bulbs – evidence of the Creator's awesome power and symbols of God's promise of new life.

I can hardly wait.

### Tulips

**Tulips**  
take time  
to meditate  
**Underground**  
gathering  
**Latent powers**  
of speech  
**Incubating**  
Spring's first  
**Paean of perfect**  
Praise

HdN

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## Theology/Agriculture

# All his enemies and mine (I)

## Recovering the idea of "enemy."

John Bolt

A few weeks ago, while listening to a sermon on Lord's Day 19, Q. & A. 52 ("Christ returning to judge the living and the dead") I was struck by the phrase in the answer, "all his enemies and mine." And I was reminded that the Psalms too are filled with references to "my enemies."

This language of "enemies" is not familiar nor comfortable to us who live in a therapeutic culture. In fact, we are even reluctant to acknowledge that we have enemies. In our culture we ourselves are often asked to assume the blame for hostilities directed against us. Hatred against us is said to be due to some fault in us. In the famous words of comic strip character Pogo: "We have met the enemy and it is us." Thus when our "experts" try to explain 9/11, for example, they ask, "What did we do to make them hate us so?"

I was never happy with this approach because I don't think that terrorist acts against civilians should ever be justified or explained. Since they are evil, pure and simple, and serve no strategic purpose except to terrorize, condemnation rather than rationalization is called for. Besides, isn't it odd that a culture reluctant to talk about sin and moral culpability on a personal level could be so eager to engage in self-loathing? But now I see an additional problem, an insight inspired by a recently published book, *Civilization*

and its Enemies: The Next Stage of History, by Lee Harris (Free Press, 2004). In this and a few additional articles I will use Harris's book to explore this notion of enemy, especially as it applies to the new situation of our world after 9/11. I will conclude with some observations about what it means that we have made an enemy of God.

Our first task, according to Harris, is to challenge our own forgetfulness. We have become a society of amnesiacs, forgetting how precarious our civilization itself is, forgetting "how much work it is to not kill one's neighbor" (p. xii). Forgetting our own condition as sinners, we don't remember "that there has ever been a category of human experience called the enemy. That, before 9/11, was what had happened to us. The very concept of the enemy had been banished from our moral and political vocabulary." (p. xii)

Why did we forget? Because we wanted to. When we have an enemy we are defined by him; his hatred of us requires that we acknowledge him as our enemy. That changes our world beyond our own control. Our enemy requires that we worry about defining ourselves; we must teach our children to fight; we must support leaders to make crisis decisions instantly on our behalf



Dürer's Knight, devil, death (detail)

# Guess what country has the most sheep – not Australia



### Maynard van der Galien

I have a feeling that sheep are making a comeback in eastern and northern Ontario. I know of a few farmers in Ontario, who have specialized in sheep production, are raising a thousand or more sheep. A neighbor has gone out of the cow-calf beef business after the BSE crisis and now has 250 sheep.

One of the biggest surprises of the 2001 Census of Agriculture was the 46 per cent increase since 1996 in the number of sheep and lambs on Ontario farms. Toronto's growing ethnic population's appetite for lamb is one reason for the huge increase. The others: lifestyle farming, the low beef prices after the BSE crisis, and people are eating a little more lamb.

An article in a farm paper I read recently said large sheep producers in the Powassan area of northern Ontario are feeding their sheep outdoors during the winter months – in the fields like beef cattle. The farmers roll out the large round bales on the snow.

Feeding sheep outside over the winter used to be virtually

unknown in Ontario, but it's a practice slowly winning converts among large flock operators, said the article. Feeding the flock on sheltered pastures instead of the traditional winter feed pens has some very important health and management benefits. The sheep are physically much stronger, far healthier and more self-reliant when they're allowed to stay in their natural setting, stated the *Ontario Farmer* article.

What country do you think has the most sheep? If you said Australia, you're wrong.

Shepherds and sheep are mentioned numerous times in biblical stories starting in Genesis 4. Man had discovered that the animal "sheep" could provide him with both covering and food. At first, man used the sheep's fleece as a kind of a tunic.

Then, around 3,500 B.C., man discovered how to spin wool. Fragments of knitted fabric have been found in Egyptian tombs dating back to the 5th Century B.C.

In the Middle Ages, European farmers discovered that sheep were the most productive of all livestock.

Sheep bred for their fine wool account for nearly half the world sheep population. They are adapted to semiarid conditions and are characterized as medium in size, with the ability to produce large amounts of wool fibers. Found extensively in Australia, New Zealand, South America, and the western United States, most sheep of this type belong to the Merino breed, which originated in the Mediterranean area and became concentrated in Spain. This breed has been modified and adapted to the conditions prevalent in various countries, and the different subtypes are usually called Merinos combined with the name of their adopted country.

Mutton-type sheep, which consist of medium- and long-wool breeds, have been bred primarily for their meat. They account for about 15 per cent of the world sheep population.

Among the medium-wool breeds are the Suffolk, Hampshire, Southdown, Dorset, Isle-de-France, Cheviot, and Oxford; and long-wool breeds, the largest of all breeds, include the Leicester, Cotswold, and Romney Marsh.

Many attempts have been made to obtain the superior wool characteristics of fine wool breeds with the meat-producing abilities of other breeds. These have resulted, in recent times, in the development of several new breeds.

In Canada we raise sheep mainly for meat; the wool is simply a by-product that is not worth much.

Some breeds are also raised for their milk, which is made into cheese.

The main sheep producing areas in Canada are Ontario and Alberta.

There are approximately one million sheep in Canada on about 11,000 farms.

We produce about 40 per cent of the lamb we consume; the balance is imported from Australia and New Zealand.

In 2003 the world sheep population was estimated at 1.03 billion head. Another figure I saw said 1.3 billion head. Based on numbers, the leading sheep countries are: China 157.3 million, Australia 94.4 million, India 62.5 million, Iran 54 million, Sudan 47 million, New Zealand 40 million, United Kingdom 35.5 million, South Africa 29 million, Turkey 25 million, Pakistan 24.7 million. Russia has 24 million, which is down 50 per cent from 25 years ago.

The number of sheep on American farms and ranges reached a peak of 56 million in 1942. In the early 1970's the number was down to about 22 million. Today the U.S. has 5.8 million breeding sheep and lambs, less than one per cent of the world total.

Too bad the price of wool is so low it doesn't even cover the cost of shearing the sheep.

Maynard van der Galien owns and operates the Old Towne Hall Restaurant and Tea Room in downtown Renfrew, Ontario



## Stewardship

All his enemies and mine ... *continued*

for our safety; we must train a military that is bound by a code of honor to unquestioning loyalty and a willingness to sacrifice even to death for the sake of the community. (pp. xiv-xvi)

Our modern world, however, has chosen not to believe this; it has chosen rather, to repudiate such preparation as evil. Departing from a Christian and tragic view of humanity, one based in a belief in original sin, modernity has turned our expectations upside down. We used to expect people to act badly and were surprised and delighted by the good they do; today we expect them to be good and are surprised when they act badly. When they do terrible things we blame our inadequate education to teach them values of cooperation and skills of conflict management and resolution. We assume that if only we would disarm voluntarily, violence would decrease and hostilities eventually cease. After all, aren't hostile actions caused by inequalities of wealth, power and opportunity? Since we are the wealthy and powerful, won't our willingness to give up our privilege then turn our enemies into our friends? In Harris's words: "Our enemies are just a friend we haven't done enough for."

In this view, people act violently because they are denied (by us!) key privileges and opportunities for prosperity and peace. They are angry with us, they hate us, because we deny them, we plunder, we oppress them. When we stop – they will become our friends.

Harris, rightly in my opinion, judges this to be a fatal error. Even "those who abhor thinking of the world *through* the category of the enemy must still be prepared to think *about* the category of the enemy. That is, even if you refuse to think of anyone else as an enemy, you must acknowledge that there are people who do in fact think this way." (p. xiii) Therefore our first responsibility is to recover the meaning of enemy. "The enemy is someone who is willing to die in order to kill us. And while it is true that the enemy always hates us for a reason, it is his reason and not ours." (p. xii)

This undermines the modern mentality which believes that our good behavior will change an enemy's attitude and turn him into a friend. Our enemy does not hate us for what we do but for what we are. "They hate us *because* we are their enemy." (p. xiii) Our behavior cannot change their attitude; only their changed attitude can change their own behavior. This is disturbing for moderns not only but, obviously, for Christians because it means that if our enemy is determined to kill us, "we have no choice but to kill them first." (p. xiii) Either that, or surrender.

Harris is right. We do need to start thinking once again about the idea of "the enemy."

In the next two articles I will explore the character and nature of our present enemy.

## Christian education – a community stewardship challenge

*Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.* Proverbs 22:6

Training a child involves teaching, modeling by parents and setting up training experiences. All three begin at home and are complemented by the modeling of others and through programs at church: in Sunday school, faith instruction, and programs like Gems and Cadets.

A third augmenting resource is your local Christian school. The key word is *complement*. Home – church – Christian school – it's like a 3-legged stool. However, the most important strand or leg is the home.

As a parent and supporter of Christian education at all levels I'm grateful for Christian education. Some people describe how they met the cost of Christian Education as a sacrifice. I don't see it that way. Is it a sacrifice to defer an up-to-date home, a new car, a boat or other unnecessary things that we might want but we really don't need? I don't think so. I believe we put these wants aside because we have a longer-term priority in mind – our children.

It is a priority that is consistent with a desire to confront the influence of our culture on our children today. With so much that is antagonistic to Christian upbringing today, I can't afford *not* to send my children to a Christian school. However, I do recognize that there are some who do not see it that way, especially at the higher levels of education when parenting becomes especially challenging.

Ron Blue, who wrote the book *Mastering Your Money* makes the following key points when it comes to money (p.26):

1. All of us have limited resources.
2. Consequently, there are more alternative uses of money available than money available.
3. Today's decisions determine destiny. (A dollar spent is gone forever and can never be used in the future for anything else.)
4. The longer the term of perspective, the better is the decision making.

Maybe some of you can remember how it was over 40 years ago when many Christian schools were started in Canada. It was a struggle for parents to meet the cost of Christian education. They had to make difficult choices as the reality of the four points above proved true. Even so, they were faithful to a longer-term perspective.

### Steps for parents considering Christian education for their children

First, make it a matter of priority. It has to be priority for both parents; parents have to collaborate in curtailing wants and managing the resources that God has entrusted to them. As children reach high school age, I believe that children too, have to make it their priority as well.

Secondly, in all marriages, it is important that husband and wife work together when it comes to financial stewardship, especially when it comes to meet the cost of Christian education. Sitting down and working out a budget is a critical and important step in managing finances on a current basis.

Edith and I have been using a simple spreadsheet cash flow manager for 16 years now. I see it as a dynamic budgeting tool we credit with giving us peace of mind even when things were very tight for us financially. By using it, it was rare for us to experience surprises. We often knew months in advance when we would be experiencing a particularly heavy drain on our finances. We worked as a team to meet the challenge! (If interested I can email a copy to you free of charge – just ask for it referring to this column.)

### Reflections on Stewardship

Rick De Graaf

Thirdly, it requires the collaboration of the Christian school support community: parents, teachers, grandparents, supporters, faculty, churches etc. As the last of Ron Blue's points indicates we need to have a longer-term perspective: the development of future Christian leadership.

There are many ways to collaborate, many that run counter to our 'I-can-do-it-myself' culture. Here are a few:

- Advice on making major purchases: affordable homes, good used cars (let others pay the high cost of depreciation – you need the money for Christian education). Sharing and trading expertise with each other so that wise purchases are made!
- Technical support: keeping the cost of servicing a used car in check and working together on home repairs e.g., replacing the roof and other unexpected costs. Trading volunteer services goes a long way to meeting the cost (Christian contractors who share your convictions can make it work).
- Car pooling, baby-sitting exchanges, sport equipment trading pools, bulk purchasing through the school, using coupons etc.

- Be sensitive to the impact that your choices may have on others, i.e., designer clothes, sports participation or recreation. You might be able to afford to give your son the use of an ATV, but is that wise?

- Grandparents/empty nesters: be ready to help out by providing interest free loans that parents can apply for to make up the shortage in their cashflow. Money that can be repaid to the fund when kids are graduated and the cashflow improves (which has been our experience as empty nesters). Many schools have set up their own foundations or endowments or work in groups to provide assistance to parents.

There are more ways that you can consider. Connect with a Christian School and you'll discover that many of them have Development Directors or other volunteers who work in the local community to provide support and assistance to families that need it. As partners with CSS, many Christian schools are experiencing a significant increase in Bequests. These Bequests serve to enhance the future viability of Christian schools.

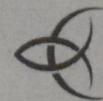
**Stewardly Tip:** Check with an accountant. Most Christian school support communities have members who have financial training. Get their advice. They can also determine what the real 'net' cost of Christian education is after income tax deductions. CSS can also help you get solid advice.

**Readers:** Share your 'Stewardly Tips' so that we all can make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Submit your suggestion and your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or ask for more details.

**Next issue:** Major Purchases – 1

Rick DeGraaf works for Christian Stewardship Services in Markham, Ontario  
Rick's email: [rickd@csservices.ca](mailto:rickd@csservices.ca)



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## Church

## In Vietnam, Christianity gains quietly



Catholic Church in Vietnam

**Roman Catholicism takes hold, especially among the young and urban**

### Simon Montlake

**PHAT DIEM, VIETNAM** – Last Christmas, the Rev. Peter Phuc fulfilled a lifelong dream: He went to Rome. With nine other priests he spent three weeks visiting churches and museums, though he didn't make an official visit to the Vatican, with which Vietnam has no diplomatic relations.

His eyes sparkle with the memory of his first foreign trip, which speaks to the lighter touch exerted by Vietnam's communist rulers on his faith. In 1980, when he was ordained at a closed-door ceremony, Roman Catholic priests ran the risk of being labeled subversives and sent to labor camps. None were permitted to travel overseas to study.

Today, his 19th-century cathedral is packed with worshipers on Sundays, and Catholic seminaries are expanding. New churches are mushrooming in this corner of northern Vietnam where Catholicism has sunk deep roots. Fr. Phuc is amazed at the rapid growth. "In the past 10 years, almost every year a new church is built. I can't keep track," he says.

Religion is still a sensitive subject in Vietnam. The US accuses it of violating the rights

of believers, particularly ethnic minority Christians in rural highlands. Vietnamese officials say they respect religious freedoms and point to recent legislation that bans forced conversions and gives equal protection to all faiths.

"Vietnamese citizens have the freedom to choose their religion. All religions are equal under the law," says Nguyen Thi Bach Thuyet, a member of the Government Committee for Religious Affairs.

Of the six official religions recognized by Vietnam, Catholicism ranks second behind Buddhism. It has between 5 million and 7 million followers, concentrated mostly in the south, and is reportedly becoming more popular among young urban Vietnamese who are enjoying the fruits of the country's rapid economic growth.

Despite a steady thawing in relations, the government continues to keep close tabs on the Catholic Church. It insists on vetting clergy appointments and priesthood candidates, and as recently as 2001 imprisoned a Catholic priest, since released, after he sent written testimony to the US Congress on religious freedom in Vietnam.

Leaders of other faiths remain behind bars, says the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, a bipartisan agency, which designates Vietnam a "country of particular concern." They include the elderly leaders

of an outlawed Buddhist sect imprisoned in 2003 and accused of possessing "state secrets," a capital offense.

By contrast, Catholics are enjoying greater freedom in Vietnam. Some say the country's economic liberalization is helping by opening the country to a free flow of ideas and information that is part and parcel of a modernized society. "Integration into the world means opportunities for dialogue with each other, it brings us together," says the Rev. Joseph Dang, secretary of the Vietnam Bishops' Council at Hanoi's cathedral.

Vietnam has yet to establish diplomatic relations with the Holy See, though both sides have exchanged visits and say dialogue is improving. Vietnam is among a handful of prominent countries with Catholic populations – such as Russia and China – that have broken ties to the Holy See.

In an unprecedented move, a senior Vatican emissary was invited to Vietnam in November. At a packed service at Hanoi's cathedral, Cardinal Crescenzio Sepe led the ordination of 57 new priests and also met with Deputy Prime Minister Vu Khoan. Cardinal Sepe hailed the visit as historic, telling Italy's *La Stampa* newspaper that in Vietnam "there are many signs which instill confidence" for a Catholic revival.

## Church 'slow' to recognize women's call for equal partnership

Geneva (ENI) – The rights of women in Church and society are still not guaranteed, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches is warning as the world marks International Women's Day on March 8.

"The Church is still slow in recognizing the urgent call for women's equal partnership with men in all areas of ministry and witness," said the Rev. Patricia Sheerattan-Bisnauth, executive secretary of WARC's office for Church Renewal, Justice and Partnership.

The United Nations has marked March 8 as International Women's Day since 1975 but its roots go back to the beginning of the 20th century.

Sheerattan-Bisnauth described the international day as an opportunity to celebrate the gains made by women while drawing attention to the need for gender awareness, and enacting policies that support the equality of women.

"In spite of all the advancements made, women's rights have not been guaranteed to the optimum level," she noted. "The fact remains that the majority of the poorest people in the world are women. The average woman, even in developed countries, still receives less pay than the average man for the same work."

"And even with all the legislation passed around the world, violent crimes against women, particularly rape and domestic violence, not only continue unabated but have been rising in the last decade," said Sheerattan-Bisnauth in a statement issued by the Reformed grouping, which gathers 75 million Reformed Christians in 218 churches in 107 countries.

In Germany, the country's top Protestant bishop, Wolfgang Huber, issued an appeal to mark the international day by urging action to stop the trafficking of women for enforced prostitution in advance of the soccer World Cup in June.

Trafficking of women often heightens during international sports events, such as the soccer tournament to take place in Germany, church leaders have warned.

WARC's general secretary, the Rev. Setri Nyomi, made a call "to the Church family and society at large to never let up in pursuing justice for women. Until we have that, we will never have true justice."

Church leaders in Vietnam say the visit could eventually pave the way for an appearance by Pope Benedict XVI, something his predecessor tried and failed to do. "Until now, I hadn't dared to dream of this," says Fr. Dang. "But there are still many steps to take before any [papal] visit."

For many here, Catholicism is still associated with the French colonizers whose rule crumbled in 1954, prompting Vietnam's division. At that time, nearly one million refugees fled to southern Vietnam, the majority of them Catholics. Phat Diem's cathedral, a curious Sino-Vietnamese-French structure with tiered pagoda roofs, became a rallying point for departing families. Today, about 15 percent of the local population is Catholic, say provincial officials.

Those who remained behind after 1954 clung to their faith, despite the strictures of communist rule. At a church in nearby Gia Xuan, elderly worshipers recall how, for decades, overworked priests

bicycled between parishes to give services. Mass was canceled when US warplanes bombed the area, but the church never closed its doors. Then, in 2004, a full-time priest was finally appointed to this parish of some 3,000 worshipers.

Nguin Thi Sau, a stooped retired farmer in a lilac blouse and black scarf, says that before the war the church had two priests and was always packed. She spends most afternoons inside its cool stone walls. "I come here and I read my Bible. Then I go home," she says, fingering her prayer beads.

Phuc says he was surprised to find out on his trip to Rome that church attendance was falling across Europe. He hopes that Vietnam's next generation – the majority of its 83 million people were born after reunification in 1975 – won't follow this trend.

"Our youth are at a crossroads between East and West. They need the advice of their elders. If they stumble, who will rescue them?" he asks.

## Church

## Orthodox trade punches in tensions over Jerusalem patriarch

Michele Green

Jerusalem (ENI) — Tensions within the Greek Orthodox Church over the dismissal of Patriarch Irineos II have not ceased with the appointment of a successor and they recently erupted as fist fights between priests and arguments over the selection of clerics to preside over church rituals.

Last week, the church held two ceremonies to mark the start of a holiday celebrating a Greek Orthodox saint — one procession held by supporters of the new patriarch Theophilus III and the other was held by his ousted predecessor Irineos.

Theophilus was so angry about a decision by the Israeli police to also provide protection for Irineos' religious procession that he refused to conduct the official ceremony, leaving it to an assistant.

Theophilus, who has appealed to Israel's Supreme Court to recognize his appointment as patriarch, called the decision by police to allow Irineos to hold his own procession in Jerusalem's Old City for the saint's day interference that amounted to "extortion and inappropriate use of pressure".

"The present reality is unacceptable," he told reporters. "It is contrary to common sense, the independence of the church and the tradition of conducting spiritual lives



Patriarch Irineos

independently [of the state]."

The previous week, several priests were wounded and two people were arrested when a fist fight erupted in St Anna's church between priests who supported and those who opposed the new patriarch.

Theophilus was elected by the church synod to replace Irineos who was ousted over allegations that he sold and leased church land without receiving the synod's approval.

Irineos, who was demoted to the rank of monk, has denied any wrongdoing and refused to step down from his post. Jordan and the Palestinian Authority have recognized Theophilus's appointment and Israel was expected to make a ruling in March.

Sources in Havana said that the apparent allegations against Lamelas are part of a harassment campaign aimed at silencing a dynamic religious leader.

His troubles began after Lamelas resisted what he considered inappropriate government interference in church affairs. At one point, he refused to sign what amounted to a loyalty pledge to the Castro regime and challenged as unconstitutional certain controls over church activities.

In January of 2005, just two months after the Church of God annual convention overwhelmingly endorsed Lamelas for a second term as president, the national board of directors voted to oust him from the position and expel him from the church.

Dozens of fellow ministers who questioned the move and expressed support for Lamelas were also expelled, without appeal.

Cuba's director of Religious Affairs issued a ruling almost immediately that endorsed the disciplinary action against Lamelas, a move that aroused suspicions of government complicity in the affair.

Deprived of income and under constant surveillance, Lamelas and his family have depended on the kindness of friends to survive for the past year. During that time, police twice detained Carlos for questioning before his arrest last week.

Those who know the Lamelas family

## World Reformed leader warns of Christian divide on political lines

Geneva (ENI) — Confusion about their role in the 21st Century is dividing Christian churches along political lines in dangerous ways that are hurting their witness, the general secretary of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the Rev. Setri Nyomi, has warned.

Nyomi was delivering the inaugural address on January 28 at the installation of Gregg Mast as president of New Brunswick Theological Seminary located in New Jersey. Mast is a former president of the Reformed Church in America.

"We live in a world divided between the rich and the poor, a world which has seen much suffering due to poverty, conflicts, natural disasters and violence," said Ghanaian-born Nyomi.

Many Christians, like the first of their faithful 2,000 years ago, he said, were asking if there was anything in sight to bring an end to such suffering.

"In response to this question," however noted Nyomi, "churches and Christian communities have allowed themselves to be divided."

vided along political lines in very dangerous ways. So we find today Christians identified by their being of the extreme right or the extreme left or somewhere in between."

Nyomi called for theological schools to be more intentional in building communities where people of different backgrounds can live together, equip students to better deal with the challenges of a broken world and create an openness to engaging in mission across racial and national lines.

The WARC general secretary told his US audience they need look no further than their own backyard for a place to begin a necessary re-visioning.

"If the American dream is simply to selfishly acquire wealth and measure success in that way, regardless of whether or not access to what it takes to live meaningfully is available to every ethnicity and different groups of people in this nation, then we have to think again," said the leader of WARC, a grouping of 75 million Reformed Christians in more than 200 churches in about 100 countries.

## Religious leaders hail Canada court ruling in favor of Sikh knife

Ferdy Baglo

Vancouver, Canada, March 8 (ENI) — A decision by the Supreme Court of Canada overturning a lower court ruling forbidding young male Sikhs from wearing the kirpan, a ceremonial knife, in school, has been applauded by representatives of other faiths.

A Sikh student had challenged the action of a Montreal school board which prohibited students from carrying the kirpan, which orthodox Sikhs hold is required by their faith.

"A total prohibition against wearing kirpans to school undermines the value of this religious symbol and sends the message that some religious practices do not merit the same protection as others," Justice Louise Charron, one of the judges, wrote in her judgement made public on March 2.

Karen Hamilton, general secretary of the Canadian Council of Churches, told Ecumenical News International, "I think it would be quite clear as a council that we understand deeply the importance of religious symbols. People of faith appreciate and understand and resonate with the importance of religious symbols."

The Canadian Jewish Congress said, "Individuals are entitled to have their religious practices accommodated unless there is a compelling reason not to do so, so long as there is a sincere belief that the practice is a requirement of the faith."

The Montreal school board had banned the kirpan because of safety concerns. This decision had been upheld by the Quebec court of appeal.

But in a unanimous 8-0 ruling, the Supreme Court said the Montreal school board's action violated the rights guaran-



ted by the Charter of Rights in Canada's constitution guaranteed to groups like the country's 300 000 Sikhs.

"I certainly hope this decision will put that matter to rest once and for all," Palinder Shergill, counsel for the Canadian branch of the World Sikh Organization.

Schools in several Canadian provinces allow the carrying of the kirpan provided it is sheathed and concealed, and Shergill said such conditions were acceptable.

The Sikh custom dates back to 1699, when Guru Gobind Singh ruled that Sikhs must wear the kirpan at all times. The kirpan can be anything from a metre-long sword to a 10 centimetre knife.

## Cuba jails evangelical church leader

LOS ANGELES (Compass) — In February Cuban authorities jailed an evangelical pastor who served as national president of his denomination until last year, apparently on charges of aiding emigrants who sought to leave the country illegally.

Relatives of Rev. Carlos Lamelas, however, said the allegations against him are groundless. Some believe police targeted Lamelas for harassment because he has challenged the Castro regime on religious rights issues.

On the morning of February 20, five police officers entered the Lamelas home in Havana and searched it thoroughly before arresting Lamelas. They also confiscated his computer, personal documents and several pieces of office equipment.

Initially, Uramis Lamelas did not know where her husband was taken. Later in the week, she learned where he was being held and requested to see him.

One week passed before authorities granted her a 10-minute visit. Uramis Lamelas said her husband appeared "exhausted and depressed," and that he had been isolated from other inmates.

Although the couple could not speak openly because police officers stood close by, Lamelas told his wife that officials are evidently seeking to incriminate him for aiding emigrants seeking to flee Cuba.

Those who know the Lamelas family

## Opinion

# Is Iraq a lost cause?

One can't doubt that the American objective in Iraq has failed.

William F. Buckley

Iraq's elected leaders can still save their country. They must now prove that they want to. Time is rapidly running out. *New York Times* editorial, March 1, 2006

This is a war over ideas and values and governance.... America's opponents know just what's at stake in the postwar struggle for Iraq, which is why they flock there: Beat America's ideas in Iraq and you beat them out of the whole region; lose to America there, lose everywhere.

Thomas Friedman

## Harry Antonides

The American-led war in Iraq continues to be a hotly contested topic. It's instructive to take a look at a few of the American voices in opposition to this war, ranging all the way from the far left to the right.

The strongest opposition has come from the political left, the mainstream media, the Democratic Party, and the academic world. The outlines of this opposition are well known for they are the daily fare of news and commentary. At its extreme, people engage in demonizing the Bush administration, going so far as calling for the impeachment of the President.

## Hard opposition

The media tends to focus on the bad news of bombings, more bloodshed, and mistakes that are not hard to find in the confusion of every war. Good news of progress and success in the rebuilding of a wrecked society is under-reported or entirely ignored. Just visit some of the most belligerent websites, and listen to the speeches of the academics who seem to believe that their task in the classroom is to instill in their students hatred towards their own country. The most strident opponents display an attitude that suggests they want to see America defeated.

For example, history professor Kenneth Long, speaking at the recent conference of Historians Against the War, explained that one of his courses was especially devised in "helping students see the ugly realities of American military aggressions over the past sixty years...." He is teaching his students that "there have been no good American wars, that the country has never come at all close to living up to the values it



US soldiers in Fallujah

professes, and, thus, that there is really little new about the current American aggressions in Afghanistan and Iraq."

Such statements are grist for the propaganda mill of the Arabic language broadcasters, but that does not seem to bother those who preach such self-loathing. They are not at all deterred by the fact that their statements are exploited by those who claim that killing Americans will earn them an assured place in heaven. Is it any wonder that the American and other coalition soldiers, who daily face the risk of being killed or maimed for life, have nothing but contempt for such armchair critics?

## Enough is enough?

What is more troublesome for the Bush administration is the growing skepticism of erstwhile supporters of the war. Some are now saying that the cost is not worth the sacrifice in view of the relentless and indiscriminate killing of people and the destruction of vital infrastructure in Iraq.

The recent attack on a major Shiite shrine – the Golden Mosque in Samarra – and its deadly aftermath confirms to many that civil war between the Sunni and Shiite Muslims is inevitable. These developments give rise to the fear that in the end Islam fundamentalists will establish their own tyrannical rule just like Hamas is now trying to do in Palestine.

Perhaps the most formidable opposition to staying the course in Iraq comes from those who have impeccable pro-American credentials. Two of them deserve mention because of what they have contributed to the defence of American virtues.

William Buckley, the major force behind the post-World War II revival of American conserva-

tism, has argued that the task of creating a democratic and free Iraq is not within America's capabilities and should not even be attempted. As he put it in March 2003, at the onset of the war:

*What Mr. Bush proposes to do is to unseat Saddam Hussein and to eliminate his investment in aggressive weaponry. We can devoutly hope that internecine tribal antagonisms will be subsumed in the fresh air of a despot removed, and that the restoration of freedom will be productive. But these concomitant developments can't be either foreseen, or implemented by us. What Mr. Bush can accomplish is the removal of a regime and its infrastructure. The Iraqi people will have to take it from there.*

In a February 28, 2006 article Buckley reiterated that the removal of Saddam Hussein and the institution of an elected government was a necessary and major accomplishment, but that the rest is now up to the Iraqis themselves.

Daniel Pipes, who has written extensively about radical Islam, also faults the current American attempts to build democracy in Iraq. He admires the Bush administration's "visionary boldness" but finds that it lacks the required "operational caution." He argues that democracy can only be built slowly especially where it must replace an imbedded totalitarian tyranny. In April 2003, Pipes wrote:

Democracy is a learned habit, not instinct. The infrastructure of a civil society – such as freedom of speech, freedom of movement, freedom of assembly, the rule of law, minority rights, and an independent judiciary – needs to be established before holding elections. Deep attitudinal changes must take place as well: a culture of restraint, a commonality of values, a respect

for differences of view and a sense of civic responsibility.

In a recent *New York Sun* article Pipes referred to the six-week victory in the spring of 2003 as "a glory of American foreign policy and of the coalition forces." He described the Bush administration's determination to create a free and democratic Iraq as a noble aim inspired by the best of America's idealism.

Nonetheless, Pipes insists that the nobility of this aim does not match the requirements for the rehabilitation of Iraq. He advises that the time has come to acknowledge that the destruction of tyranny in Iraq, which he calls a "landmark of international sanitation," is all that can be accomplished. He sums up:

*Fixing Iraq is neither the coalition's responsibility nor its burden. The damage done by Saddam will take many years to repair. Americans, Britons and others cannot be tasked with resolving Sunni-Shiite differences, an abiding Iraqi problem that only Iraqis themselves can address.*

Sounds quite simple and persuasive, doesn't it? However, nothing in the Middle East cauldron is simple. That's why the *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman, quoted at the beginning of this article, is right: this is a war of ideas that will have far-reaching ramifications beyond Iraq.

## Staying the course

I find the arguments for staying the course, as argued by David Frum, Victor Davis Hanson, Rich Lowry, Christopher Hitchens and many others, the most persuasive.

But who can be sure? It is still possible that despite the best efforts and the noblest motivations, the forces of evil and tyranny will prevail. Despite the risks and nagging uncertainty, let me summarize the case for the ongoing American-led effort in Iraq, as I see it:

**One.** To pull out now is to abandon the many people of goodwill in Iraq (and Afghanistan) who would meet the same fate as the tens of thousands Iraqis murdered and dehumanized in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf war. **Two.** The Iraqis still need outside military and other help, notably in adequately training and equipping their security forces, if they are to defeat the old guard of tyrants and murderers, which is one indispensable condition for success.

**Three.** Failure in Iraq will be a sign to the Islamofascists that Allah is making them invincible, a conviction that will assist them in further spreading fear and disunity in the West.

**Four.** As long as our soldiers (including Canadians in Afghanistan, representing the free West) are fighting and dying on the frontlines, we should support them for they are fighting for the cause of our freedom too.

**Five.** The war in the Middle East is not only, nor even in the first place, about territory or Iraq. It is a microcosm of the war between the still free and democratic West and a cabal of fanatic religionists that wants to establish a Taliban-style dictatorship. The problem is that the Islamic fanatics are very determined, whereas we in the West are complacent, materialistic and lacking in conviction about things truly significant.

## Telling it as it is

One of the positive developments is the increasing number of moderate Muslims and others in the Islamic world who have begun to speak up strongly, often at great personal risk. Among them are a number of courageous women, including Wafa Sultan, an Arab woman now living in the U.S., who recently took on Ibrahim Al-Khouli on Al-Jazeera television. She challenged his attempt to blame others for the cruelty and violence committed in the name of Allah. She gets to the heart of the matter in a way that many in the West are too ignorant or cowardly to do:

*The clash we are witnessing around the world is not a clash of religions, or a clash of civilizations.... It is a clash between civilization and backwardness, between the civilized and the primitive, between barbarity and rationality. It is a clash between freedom and oppression, between democracy and dictatorship. It is a clash between human rights, on the one hand, and the violations of these rights, on the other. It is a clash between those who treat women like beasts, and those who treat them like human beings. What we see today is not a clash of civilizations. Civilizations do not clash, but compete.*

May the spirit of courage and honesty reflected in Wafa Sultan's eloquent testimony yet prevail.

Harry Antonides  
hantonides@sympatico.ca

## Poetry/Nature

## Black, brown, and grey

Curt Gesch

In one of his books, Robert Ruark says that his grandfather, a great bird hunter, called mallard drakes "French" ducks because of their loud colors. The glossy green head of the drake, the bright orange feet, yellow bill and metallic blue of the secondary flight feathers: these were too gaudy for the old man's eye. (Information as to whether mallard drakes believe in body piercing and under-feather tattoos is not available.)

The pintail, on the other hand, received approval: the drake had clean lines and the sense to dress himself in blacks, whites, and browns, while the female sported an always-classy herringbone feather pattern. Pintail beaks and feet were appropriately modest as well. All in all, said the old man, the pintail was a duck in a tuxedo.

Basic black, the pin-striped suit, the little black dress are always in style. I once saw a Mercedes jacked up about four feet in the air, with a metallic stripe down its side. Junior had gotten hold of dad's car. Not just naughty, but somehow almost sacrilegious.

Soon comes spring. We will be drowned in colours. Gaudy mallards, to be sure, and blindingly-beautiful wood ducks. Tanagers (scarlet or western), the ubiquitous Robin Red-Breast. Warblers so bright that many hide their colours in the shrubbery: yellow warblers, Wilson's warblers, yellow-rumped warblers. We are red-startled by cardinals, purple finches, house finches, and grosbeaks. Orioles amaze us. Hummingbirds stun us with their antics and the male's iridescent throat-patches. Red-winged black birds cry kong-ka-ree while they flash their epaulettes in the faces of rivals, lady redwings, and watching humans.

Nice stuff—all this color. What G.M. Hopkins says about autumn is also true about spring: it's "barbarous in beauty."

But...

I find it easier to identify with a pintail than a showy mallard. I feel more like a chipping sparrow than a cardinal.

I envy the hermit thrush, rarely seen, perfectly camouflaged, and ethereal of voice.



To tell the truth, I suppose that I love the spring migration of birds—complete with show-off species—as much as any. But on this late winter morning I am at peace in a brown, black, and grey world. I feel at ease with black, white, and grey chickadees, with striped, dull brown siskins (their yellow wings patches hardly visible).

Glorious Elves and heroic Men may fight Sauron, but it takes a hobbit to defeat him. And positively hobbitish is how I feel on a grey day in March.

Not too spectacular a life, you may say. But I've also heard of someone great who wasn't too spectacular. In fact, he had no form or comeliness that we should desire him. "Plain" is in good company.



## Peyto Lake

an awkward step  
beside the path  
brings me knee deep  
in the just-right-for-snowballs snow

the air  
crisp and fresh  
with birds  
and spires of straight spruce  
we tramp to this glacier lake  
one of the jewels of the Rockies  
emerald from glacier silt in summer  
today wearing a scrim of crinkled ice  
over its green-rimmed turquoise surface

on our return  
we step in former footsteps  
one two  
one two  
slip and slide  
fall and laugh

faces warm and red  
from the exertion  
as we put on dry socks  
at the parking lot

## On the Frozen Lake

suspend imagination  
for just the time it takes  
to drive around the lake  
with the half-ton truck

half a ton  
on this ice surface  
fifteen inches thick  
capping  
ten to forty feet of water  
trust the driver  
notice the fresh tracks  
of other vehicles  
who've ventured here

a new perspective  
to see the shore from the lake  
and the lake from the lake  
in winter  
ice fishing huts crouch alone  
or in small villages  
beside tracks of quads coyotes  
snowmobiles and quail  
frozen drifts of packed snow  
natural speed bumps

the middle of the lake  
broken with freezing  
and contracting  
pushed up in a ridge  
a magic crease  
with chunks of emerald ice  
set against  
lavender snow

an arctic scape  
and no camera

## Of Peels and Shells

consider the egg shell  
efficient seal-proof container  
for liquid contents  
a bird's first residence  
aesthetically pleasing  
compostable

consider the orange peel  
seals in juice  
prevents dehydration  
aromatic  
welcome for orioles

consider each fruit skin  
Gala apple  
plum  
Concord grape  
watermelon  
banana  
the original baggie  
delays decay  
efficient  
without the assistance  
of the Glad man  
or Tupperware lady

consider the Creator

## Reviews

# Children's books: Bible stories, creation, history



## At Jerusalem's Gate

Poems of Easter

By Nikki Grimes, illustrated by David Frampton, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, 2005 ISBN 0-8028-5183-5, 48 pp.

All Ages

Nikki Grimes' exploration of Easter is much more than a poetic historical recounting of the events that led up to and followed Christ's death and resurrection. Rather, her compelling poems – illustrated with the detailed, expressive woodcuts of David Frampton – reverberate with her love for the Lord, and thus become an act of worship.

In her introduction, Grimes points out that "there are as many questions in the Easter story as there are answers." Through the perspective of key witnesses to the events during Passion Week and Easter, Grimes gives voice to those questions. Each poem is prefaced with a short paragraph relating the biblical events recalled in the poem. This serves as a reminder of the facts for those who know the old, old story, and it makes the poem meaningful for those who are unfamiliar with the biblical narrative.

Grimes' eyewitnesses are not one-dimensional characters, but spring to life in the reader's mind. Here's what some of them may have thought, according to the author:

A priest who saw Jesus enter Jerusalem:

... He is, by all accounts, extraordinary, yet I find him quite ordinary. Until he turns and drinks me in. I gasp, a-tremble, grasp a palm frond and wave in a frenzy, of praise and adoration singing Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna! As if my very life depends upon it.

Pilate, as he faced the crowds:

I ascend the judgement bench, wrinkle my nose at the vile stench of political plot born

of jealousy, and declare, I will set this Jesus free for I find no cause against him." . . . My undernourished conscience is certain of his innocence, so I propose a reprimand but fail to meet the crowd's demand . . .

And Simon, who was enlisted to carry Jesus' cross:

What's this? Two soldiers rend me from the jostling crowd and shift his burden to my bony shoulders. Am I here by accident or divine providence? (Is it for me to know?) The man looks up, just so, and peers into my soul until he makes me his. I whisper, "Give me strength," measure the path ahead, the street well-named Sorrow, and, mourning early, follow.

Because of its beauty and insight, Grimes' book is one to be savored, to return to again and again. It can also serve as a book for Lenten reflections, either for family or personal devotions.

## Song of Creation

By Paul Goble, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, 2004 ISBN 0-8028-5271-8, 32 pp.

All Ages

While studying in England, author and illustrator Paul Goble came upon The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men in *The Book of Common Prayer*. Goble's rendition of the song, which calls on all of creation to bless the Lord, is an extension of the original. He adds verses so that readers will think creatively about how all aspects of creation glorify God, and contribute verses of their own. Bold illustrations capture the beauty of God's world and the text points to its Creator's majesty.



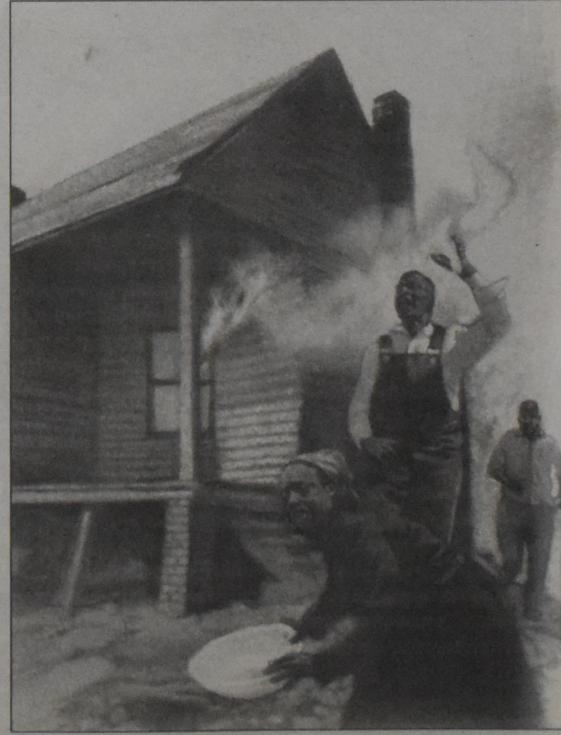
## Mississippi Morning

By Ruth Vander Zee, illustrated by Floyd Cooper, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, 2004 ISBN 0-8028-5211-4, 32 pp.

Ages 9 and up

Children lose their naivete about the adult world at various ages and in differing ways. For young James William the loss is particularly bitter. Each day when his chores are completed, and he's free to roam in the woods and to fish in the creek, his mother warns him to stay out of trouble. He can't understand her concern because he has no intention of doing something that would upset her. There is plenty of trouble afoot in his rural southern community in 1933, but he isn't aware of it.

James William is used to colored and white people being treated differently. However, when he hears that his father condoned the



## Reviews/Season

burning of the colored preacher's house, he can't believe that he is capable of such cruelty. Later, James William learns about the hanging tree, the Klan, and tarring of a colored man. When he asks his father about the disturbing stories he's heard, his father refuses to discuss them.

One morning James William gets up early to milk the cow. Returning from the barn, he sees a white-robed person running toward the farm. When the person stumbles, James William sees his face – and his world is shattered.

*Mississippi Morning* is a powerful commentary on a disturbing period in American history. Ruth Vander Zee's engrossing story and Floyd Cooper's gripping illustrations profoundly stirred this reader.

**The Coat of Many Colors**

By Jenny Koralek, illustrated by Pauline Baynes, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Books for Young Readers ISBN 0-8028-5277-7, 28 pp.

Ages 3 and up

When Jacob gives his son Joseph a many-colored coat, he doesn't realize how much trouble it will cause. Of course, the coat isn't the real problem. Joseph's relationship to his brothers is. Jenny Koralek's retelling of the biblical narrative – complemented by Pauline Baynes' emotionally expressive illustrations – captures the rage, jealousy, duplicity, and amazing grace of the biblical narrative.

Reviews by Sonya Vanderveen-Feddeema.

**Lent is a time to evaluate relationships**

**Lisa M. Petsche**

*I hate how it is to feel frustrated, irritated, disconnected from it all. I'm breaking, I'm aching for something beautiful.*

Krystal Meyers,  
Christian recording artist

In today's fast-paced, individualistic, achievement-oriented society, relationships can all too easily get short shrift, owing to our busyness, preoccupation and stress.

Fortunately, the Lenten season presents us with a wonderful opportunity to critically evaluate our connection to our Creator, ourselves, loved ones and the world around us, and get back on track.

Good communication is the key to any healthy relationship. Since we're continually growing and changing as individuals, it needs to be ongoing. Mutual sharing leads to increased understanding of one another, which in turn results in greater intimacy.

While communication is a two-way process, listening is more difficult than speaking, because a) it requires patience, since we're able to process information faster than it can be transmitted, and b) we must relinquish self-focus – no easy task in this age of egocentrism.

In contrast to hearing, which is passive, listening requires effort. Good listeners make themselves available; give their full attention, eliminating or tuning out external and internal distractions; are open-minded, sensitive and non-judgmental; and listen with their heart as well as their head.

Specifically, though, how do we deepen our relationship with God, in order to experience his unconditional love and peace and ascertain his unique plan for us? We can accomplish this through reading Scripture (the written word of God) and meditating on it, or being still and "listening to his voice in the depths of our hearts" (Mother Teresa).

Although God can speak to us anywhere, anytime, certain conditions make us more receptive, including a desire to know him better and a quiet environment. Appointing a time and place for regular, in-depth communication with him helps us develop and maintain an intimate relationship.

Another important type of communication involves connecting with our inner being – that is, tuning in to our feelings and our needs (which may be quite different from our wants), developing our intuition, discovering our hidden talents and skills, reflecting on our experiences and determining what we can learn from them, establishing and monitoring priorities and contemplating choices. (Self-help gurus refer to this as living intentionally, listening to your life and discovering your authentic self.)

We'd do well to set aside quiet time at the end of each day for such review. Some people include journaling as part of the process.

This reflection time is also an opportunity to look deep inside to the imperfections that keep us separated from our Creator and one another, and determine how we can use the gifts God has given us in his kingdom here on earth.

Listening is also key to communicating with others. As I discovered in my social work training, it's a complex skill that needs to be developed, practiced and refined. Among other things, good interpersonal listening involves demonstrating interest and empathy through attentive body language (maintaining eye contact, for example) and using all of our senses. It also includes listening for underlying themes and feelings and paying attention to non-verbal cues such as tone of voice, energy level and posture.

Listening can provide us with valuable feedback about our behavior, helping us get to know ourselves better. It's also a means of ascertaining people's needs and wishes, a prerequisite to helping loved ones, neighbors and colleagues as well as the impoverished and oppressed. We can learn about the plight of the latter group by keeping abreast of current affairs through the media; we can then respond with charitable works and social justice endeavors.

Another reason for listening attentively to other people is that God sometimes speaks to us through them – offering needed encouragement, words of wisdom or thought-provoking observations and questions, for example.

Behavioral experts say it takes an average of 21-30 days to change or establish a habit. The forty days of Lent allow us ample time, therefore, to improve upon our listening skills as well as build a habit of regular reflection.

If we're patient and persistent, we'll be rewarded with a spiritual transformation that brings fulfillment and peace.

*Lisa M. Petsche is a clinical social worker and a freelance journalist specializing in spirituality and family life.*



## Ecclesiastes

# Don't ask why

Do not say, "Why were the old days better than these?"

For it is not wise to ask such questions.

Ecclesiastes 7:10

A.A. van Ruler

The Preacher is not denying that the old days may have been better than the present. Here he is probably thinking first of all in terms of the life journey of the individual. It, too, brings dramatic changes. A person's early years may unfold in sunny prosperity only to be swallowed up by dark forests of tribulation. Unwittingly such a person often becomes a praise-singer for the past. But this praise then hides a lament about the present.

This introduces a powerful doubleness into life, not to speak of ambiguity: the song of praise is essentially a lament.

But this is true not just of the life of the individual. Something similar is true also of world history. There are those who are always talking about the good old days. In the past, in earlier times or ages things were much better. They long for the return of those times.

Pessimism about the present also often conceals such an attitude. Some people are unable to find a single ray of hope in the present: it is all wickedness and perversity. So they glorify the past. Their sunny view of the good old days arises from their sombre view of their present circumstances. The praise-singer of the past is actually the lament-singer of the present.

However, this doubleness is not the central point the Preacher wants to make, namely, that a sunny view may arise out of a sombre one. He doesn't deny that the old days may have been very different from the present. He is a realist himself, taking life as it is. A realist must admit that, whether on the personal or on the broader level, it has happened – things have indeed gone from good to bad at times. Life does not remain static. It is always moving and changing, and it passes through depths as well as over heights.

What the Preacher is saying here is this: that we must not ask why this is so and what causes these changes. Such questions do not arise out of wisdom, he says.

Isn't that a strange thing to say – that it is not wise to inquire into the reasons for change, into why things were once good and are now bad? Why isn't this wise? Why would inquiring into the causes and reasons of things ever be unwise?

The context of our text supplies some answers. Verse 9 points out that when we inquire after the reasons for changes in our lot in life, we are guilty of foolishness. "Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools." Such questioning quickly devolves into an angry and outraged questioning. We become bitter. We grow angry with life and with God. We are disgruntled and offended.

Taking offense always involves an element of foolishness. Sometimes we are offended by our own selves, but more often we are offended by others. But there is nothing worse than being offended by the lot life has dealt us and by how God has led us.

We must never stop warning one another against the great danger of bitterness and hardness of heart. For if we give in to it, we are shutting ourselves up in our own misery. Then we end up all by ourselves complaining and bewailing our lot in life. Ultimately this reaction to our misfortune leads to a dead end.

But the Preacher also points to something else: in verse 8



he says, "The end of a matter is better than its beginning, and patience is better than pride." In other words, he's advising us to wait and see how things turn out. Before something is over, it is not yet completed; so it is not completely there. All kinds of things can still issue from it. The miserable situation in which we find ourselves may take a turn for the better; in fact, it may turn out to benefit us in many ways. Suffering may contain blessings.

However, we must not seek to extort blessing out of suffering by force. We must be patient with God and with life. We must await the end of things and not judge them prematurely. For that is a sign of pride.

We human beings stand in the middle of things and of life. So we must not pretend that we can already here and now utter a definitive judgment. That is pride. Only God can give a definitive judgment on things, for he can see their end. We cannot.

So it is unwise to ask why the old days were better than the present, not just because it conceals a certain anger but also because it conceals a certain pride.

But verse 13 provides a third reason: "Consider what God has done: Who can straighten what he has made crooked?" It is a devastatingly humbling answer.

Above all it contains the thought that God is a God who also bends and twists things, making them crooked. Even when times are bad, we must think: God has made this too – the bad as well as the good (7:14).

Why God sometimes makes things crooked, we often don't know. We must nurture our trust that God does this out of his wisdom and goodness. If we do not nurture this trust, we will lose our way. If we do not cling to the faith

that in all that he does God is wise and good, we commit ourselves and life itself to perdition.

This trust demands a certain degree of blindness. Do we see God's wisdom and goodness in everything he does? What if he bends my life so badly that it seems crooked? Don't the lives of some people resemble a wrecked automobile being hauled to the wreckers?

There's still another reason this text is so devastatingly humbling. Not just because it acknowledges that it is God who sometimes makes things crooked, but also because it goes on to say that no one can make straight what God has made crooked. We are like leaves in the wind of God's breath. God can make us and break us. We are no match for God.

Consequently, there's something almost ridiculous about our asking why the old days were better than the present. Who are we, poor creatures to ask such a question? What do we hope to accomplish by asking such questions? Do we think to alter life and reality from how God has made it? There is something laughable about our lack of wisdom. Someone who does not respect the sovereignty of God is foolish.

The Preacher, thus, points us to our limits in several ways. We cannot gain an overview of life. We cannot utter a definitive judgment on things. We cannot alter God's doings. We can only stand in the present. We can let things happen to us, but we can also accept them – as they are. We have but one calling – to be human beings before the face of God. Only those who find peace with God are saved.

## Christian living

## People used by God



## Richard Oostra

David Voetman enrolled in a Canadian Bible School in 1954 because he wanted to become a missionary. There that he learned about the importance of missionary aviation and was led to take further training to become a pilot for the Lord.

When I met him over 50 years later, he had not only become a full-fledged pilot and airplane mechanic, but over 40 years he had flown well over 10,000 hours. In Africa he was used not only to fly missionaries around but he also made many emergency flights at high risk to bring the sick to hospitals, bring food into a famine stricken Sudan, and to rescue people caught in the war zone in the Congo.

After his retirement, however, he had one more passion: that was to see an aircraft come into existence that would be more effective for the cause of missions. The organization he had served, Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF), had at one time well over 160 aircraft worldwide. The aircraft suitable for their kind of flying, however, were not manufactured anymore and the ones they had were in constant need of repair. Old aircraft were being cannibalized to obtain parts for those still in use. So the MAF fleet had been reduced to 54 and their services were greatly limited. All this had made the cost of flying extremely high.

Next to wartime flying, mission aviation can be a most dangerous vocation. Runways are often once-muddy roads. Jungles and mountainous terrain provide limited space for landing or take-off. Weather conditions usually have to be guessed at and cargo space is often extremely limited. Yet, without air transportation many mission stations are almost beyond reach, and many indigenous churches would end up isolated and perhaps languish.

For his retirement project David embarked on a passionate search for the means and the right people to be used by God to work towards a better future for mission aviation. The Lord led him to a man who had been an airplane builder in the past. Several times David talked to him about the need for a new missionary/bush aircraft, and after much persistence a meeting was arranged between this man and the president of David's aviation organization.

The men David brought together were Tom Hamilton, founder and past owner of Tom Glas Air and David's new helper in his vision, Bruce Kennedy, past CEO of Alaska Airlines and former Board Chairman of MAF.

Both of these men were impressed by David's vision that something could and should be done for the cause of mission aviation. After much further consultation a group of missionary pilots and aviation experts came together to study the feasibility and requirements of an effective aircraft for their work.

Here are just a few:

- A jet propelled engine for quicker take-offs and reverse landing power for shorter runways.
- A more powerful engine to give greater load or cargo capacity, which means fewer trips and thus greater cost-effectiveness.
- A short wingspan for greater maneuverability on hazardous airstrips.
- A jet engine that would reduce the consumption of aviation fuel, which costs as much as \$15.00 per gallon in many third world countries compared to jet fuel costing about \$1.50 per gallon.
- A jet engine that would also provide a longer-range, making it possible to reach more distant locations more rapidly without

## Let's meet for coffee....

I don't drink coffee. If places like Tim Hortons had to rely on people like me to stay afloat, they would be quickly out of business.

Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday morning I play basketball with a number of men that are also dedicated (or crazy) enough to meet three times a week at 7 a.m. After basketball I drive by a Tim Horton's and marvel at the number of people lined up at the counter and the parade of cars lined up in the drive-thru (that is how it is spelled, apparently spelling "through" "thru" can save more time for drinking coffee). That we have so many Tim Horton's franchises in Canada is incredible if you remember that they make their money selling things that cost around one dollar. That is a lot of donuts and coffee.

Coffee is an industry unto its own. There are songs about coffee. Coffee comes leaded and unleaded. There are countless types of coffee. Starbucks sells a coffee for \$4.70! For one coffee! A sin to be sure. You can even buy coffee machines with timers on them so that your coffee is waiting for you when you wake up.

I tried coffee once. I can remember the day like yesterday. I was sitting in my grandparent's house in The Netherlands and my Beppe (grandmother) took it upon herself to open the world of adulthood to me through a cup of coffee.

After all, I was already 20 years old. She mentioned something about how real men drink coffee and it was about time I started. I can still remember that the cup and saucers were pure white and the coffee was pure black. The contrast stood out. Possibly this contrast was a symbol of what was to come, the pure and the impure.

I decided to try the coffee. I thought that it couldn't be that bad; everyone seemed to be drinking it. So I took my first sip and thought that this liquid might be good if I was tarring a roof. Although that first sip should have been my last, I decided to grind it out, not wanting to disappoint my Beppe. I was feeling a mixture of pride and confusion after drinking the entire cup and thought, how could people drink this stuff?

It was about 20 minutes later that my body started to percolate. It disapproved of the new beverage and reminded me for two days. It was

the need of refueling.

- An aluminum aircraft that could be easily repaired on the field, instead of fiberglass that is more difficult to certify and repair.

From a company's perspective the needs were very obvious.

- A manufacturing plant that had runway accessibility.
- An aircraft company that would build for missions, but that could also sell its product commercially in order to create profits that would subsidize missions orders.
- Passionate and experienced technicians who would work for a low wage in order to see this project financially pass through its critical stage.
- A charter and Charitable Trust that

## My window seat

Mendelt Hoekstra



my last cup of coffee.

It is a bit of a social handicap when you don't drink coffee. It is almost as if there is a prejudice against my non-habit. Following church services I do not get my after-church drink where the adults do. If I want something to drink, I need to cozy up with the four-year olds and ask if I can have a cup of what they drink, usually colored sugar with water.

At work we have rest periods called coffee breaks. Can I break if I don't drink coffee? There is even a weekly church sanction group called Coffee Break. At conventions, the first thing they serve in the morning is coffee. When you go to a restaurant, they have coffee cups waiting for you because they assume that people drink coffee – it is just what people do when they sit down.

I have friends that routinely read the paper while drinking a coffee in the morning. Maybe you are reading this right now with a cup of coffee in your hand.

When I recently brought my vehicle in for an oil change they had free coffee for the customers. Again I missed out on a free beverage.

Years back, my friends got married and gave every guest a one dollar Tim Horton's gift certificate with a dime stuck to it; the exact amount of money for a medium coffee.

Depending on whom you speak with or what you read, coffee is either good or bad for you. I don't know if it is good or bad for you. What I can appreciate about coffee is the culture that surrounds it. So much so that sometimes I wish I did like coffee. It seems to have an inviting nature to it.

People seem to have so much fun when they have that warm cup in their hands, they seem to socialize better. People meet over coffee. When I see an old friend, I even use the saying, "Let's meet for coffee" – even though I have no intention of touching the stuff ever again. People invite others over for coffee".

You might notice in my bio that Marisa and I are excitedly expecting another child. I'm sure you will hear about it when the day comes, but don't expect the name to be Joe.

*Mendelt Hoekstra is a Music Therapist in the Niagara region. He lives with Marisa and their two children in Vineyard and they are happily expecting another child sometime in May. Email: mhoekstra@bethesdaprotocols.com.*

US government (FAA) testing for market certification.

An expertly staff of 64 employees is presently working diligently for minimal salaries manufacturing these aircraft, and the total cost of this project is under 30 million dollars. Similar aircrafts that have been developed commercially have had development costs of 300-400 million dollars.

Yes, a new day is dawning for mission aviation thanks to the initial passion of one man, David Voetman, and the many technicians and donors that God brought together. For more detailed information please check in on [www.questaircraft.com](http://www.questaircraft.com) or phone Dave Voetman at 206-200-8319

## Movies

## In trust and anticipation

I am going to visit Afghanistan this month with a small group of university educators, including my husband. The educators will meet with Afghan university presidents and deans for four days in Kabul. For my husband and I this trip represents an opportunity of a life time. It did not take long for us to decide to accept, when my husband received the invitation to give several lectures on university governance and leadership at this conference.

My role in this group is self-assigned and simple. I am going to Afghanistan to observe the culture, learn about the lives of Afghan women and children, and take in the scenery. I hope to have the opportunity to visit a school and an orphanage, and learn about how women in Afghanistan are making progress towards full participation in society. Our team of seven people will be in Afghanistan under the umbrella of UNESCO. We have been assured we will be safe; an issue our friends and relatives lovingly express concern about.

I am trying to read as much as I can about Afghanistan. I need to get the history straight, and learn about schools, orphanages and women's groups. Interacting effectively with people of a different culture makes it necessary to understand their mind-set. People in Afghanistan have suffered decades of turmoil, destruction, and crises. Afghanistan was once a proud country with a history steeped in tradition. Even though progress has been made in recent years, much of the country now lies in ruins. It has had to depend heavily on the generosity of benevolent countries for its reconstruction. Many years of oppression and deprivation has left behind a generation of people who feel their spirit is crushed.

The human spirit can be violated, abandoned, tortured, damaged, and crushed but never destroyed. The Afghan people are determined to prevail. I just read a lecture given in 2005 by the Afghanistan's Minister of Higher Education, Dr. Amir Hassanyar. He suggests that after four years of reconstruction in the country, the time has come for the people of Afghanistan to move forward. He expresses deep gratitude for all international aid received over the years and acknowledges more is required.

At the same time he talks about how hard it is to have to depend on gifts from other people because it has put the people of Afghanistan in a dependent mode. This must now change. The process of decision making on how international aid should be used, also must change. It has to be managed by the Afghan people rather than by donors with vested interests. Only Afghan people know what is best for their country. They are not beggars or thieves, but a people deeply conscious of their history, culture and traditions, and they treasure them.

Afghanistan wants to interact with foreign countries by way of partnerships that promote equality, collaboration, mutual respect and trust. Our trip to Afghanistan is intended to reflect such a respectful partnership. I will try hard to adapt to the situations I find myself in. In terms of my dress, I have been asked to blend in with the culture and to wear clothes that cover me fully, and a scarf wide enough to cover my face, if required. I will do that. At the same time, however, I realize that no matter how I dress, I will not blend in because I am Dutch-Canadian, and have blonde hair and blue eyes. However, I will dress to reflect respect.

## Building Trust

Vicky Van Andel Ed.



So I am busy choosing my clothes and it is proving quite a puzzle. With some imagination I came up with a few ideas, in spite of feeling I am groping in the dark. I will take a couple of black ponchos, a cool one and a warm one, to accommodate the fluctuating temperatures in Kabul. Then I plan to take a couple of dark floor length broomstick skirts. To go with the skirts, I have a couple of short and long sleeved t-shirts. My arms must remain covered but I hope to manage that with my poncho. I am told it can be warm in March in Kabul, and too many layers can be hard on a person. The scarf I plan to take is not big enough to cover my face. I know I am taking a chance there.

So much for my wardrobe for Kabul. It is clear to me I won't feel like myself because first of all, I never wear ponchos. I also never wear anything on my head except for a toque in very cold weather. Add to that I like snug clothes and never wear anything that flutters around me. But it's the best I can do. I've come to the conclusion that if all else fails, if I really feel uncomfortable, I'll just drop by one of the bustling market stalls in Kabul and buy myself a burka.....

That leads me to my next challenge. For safety reasons I will not be able walk alone in Kabul and have to be accompanied by someone wherever I go. I wonder how that is going to work for a free spirit such as me. I love walking, feeling fresh air on my face, looking around at interesting sights, and exploring what's behind the next corner. I am also a hobby photographer with an uncontrollable urge to capture everything I see.

I'm already exploring ways I can wear my camera so it's not visible. I won't sling it over my shoulder in a big case as I usually do. Instead, I will carry it on a strap around my neck under my poncho. I plan to sew a secret pocket for my zoom lens. I'm not even sure if photography is acceptable for tourists in Afghanistan. I'll have to play that by ear. One thing is for sure, I plan to play by the rules, no matter what.

It is clear that during my week in Kabul my life will be very different because my set ways of doing things will be challenged to the extreme. I hope to deal with it by navigating this experience just as it comes, to live one moment at a time, and to adapt to whatever circumstances come by way.

Come to think of it, that's good advice for life in general! Actually, I am realizing just now, this is how I live my life at home too, every day, for better or for worse. This realization encourages me. Life will go on just the way it always does. Nothing will change except my immediate environment. I will continue to live in the moment and appreciate life the way it unfolds.

In my next column I hope to write about what it feels like to be a foreign woman in Afghanistan. I hope I will be able to tell some stories about Afghan women and children. I see this as a wonderful adventure, and look forward to it with great anticipation. Above all, I know that the God who protects me and the team here at home, will protect all of us over there.

*Vicky Van Andel is the editor of this column. Anyone who would like to contribute to this column is invited to contact her via e-mail at: vickyv@telus.net*

## Sophie's choice: confess to Nazis or face execution



Scene from Movie: Sophie Scholl arrested

Peter Rainer

Several recent movies ranging from "Munich" to "Eight Below" have been "inspired by" true stories, although the factual connections are somewhat tenuous. As a fact-based drama, "Sophie Scholl - The Final Days," an Oscar nominee for best foreign-language film, is on much more solid ground. It's about Germany's most famous anti-Nazi heroine, who, at 21, was arrested and summarily executed in 1943 as a member of the underground resistance movement.

Sophie's story has been told before, most prominently in Michael Verhoeven's "The White Rose," but this new film, which was directed by Marc Rothemund from a screenplay by Fred Breinersdorfer, is the first to utilize previously unpublished Gestapo transcripts of the interrogation of Sophie (Julia Jentsch) and her brother Hans (Fabian Hinrichs). The realization that we are, in many instances, listening in on actual proceedings gives the film an immediacy that no dramatist could hope to match.

The film begins as Sophie and Hans are captured while covertly distributing pamphlets at the Munich university where they are studying. (The student resisters call themselves The White Rose.) Both are arrested and kept apart from each other. Sophie's interrogator, the Gestapo agent Robert Mohr (Alexander Held), is a practiced criminologist and yet, in their initial cross examination, she is so convincing in her denials that he is prepared to let her go.

The film is told entirely from Sophie's point of view, which gives the film a gathering atmosphere of inescapable dread. Although she is an expert liar who never once flinches or betrays the slightest hesitation in her responses, inevitably the evidence mounts against her and she proudly proclaims the rightness of her non-violent resistance to the Reich.

Her interrogation scenes with Mohr are the emotional heart of the movie. We see how this young woman, so composed on the surface,

is breaking up. At one point she asks to use the lavatory but once inside, she cries silently before striding straight-faced back into the fray. Mohr's steadfast demeanor carries its own rictus of pain: He is sympathetic to Sophie and offers her a way out if only she will confess. To everyone's astonishment, perhaps Sophie's as well, she refuses.

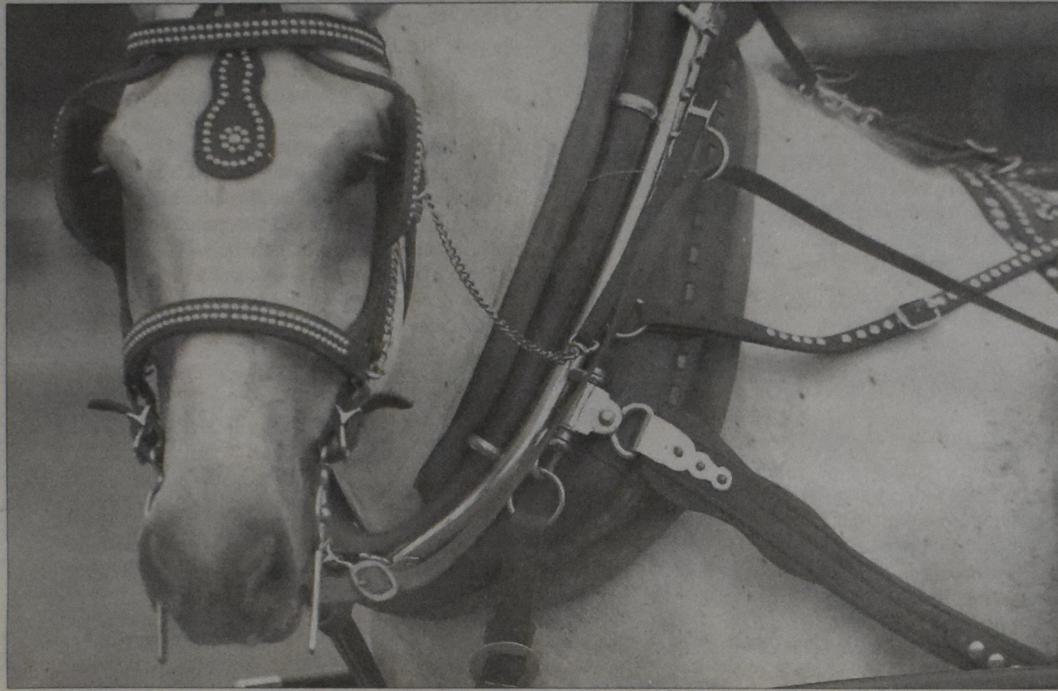
She attempts to convince Mohr and the others that only she and Hans constitute the White Rose but soon others are rounded up, including the father of three young children, who, along with Sophie and her brother, are put on trial by the Reich's "People's Court." (These hair-raising proceedings have been lifted from the public record as well.) Sentenced to death, they were executed the same afternoon instead of being held for the customary 99 days.

Sophie is such an icon that at times Rothemund can't resist adding a halo to her crown. When she looks through the bars of her cell, the sunlight gives her face a transcendent glow. Except for that scene in the lavatory, and a brief moment with her parents at the end, we never see her lose her cool. Sophie by all accounts was a fun-loving student, and it would have been more powerful, and heart-rending, if some of that quality had poked through the steely reserve. The actual photos of a smiling Sophie that are shown during the end credits are more evocative than anything else in the movie. They made me want to see a documentary about her.

Rothemund's use of the recorded testimony, while it gives his film a startling veracity, also limits his imagination. It prevents him from delving too deeply into the psychology of these activists. How does someone like Sophie, from seemingly out of nowhere, become a passionate defender of freedom in the face of certain death? The film depicts her Protestant faith as running deep, and yet we are left with the unexplainable. Perhaps that is all we can hope to be left with.

## Draft Horses

## Meet these 'gentle giants'



## Nancy Humphrey Case

When Elizabeth Flint was 7, her parents went to an auction and brought home the biggest creatures she'd ever seen. They were draft horses – the kind of heavy horses that worked on farms before tractors were invented. But Elizabeth's parents didn't buy the drafts because they needed help with their crops. The Flints, who live in Highgate Center, Vt., bought these big horses because they have a sweet nature. The horses also are fun to show and can help with pulling things on the farm. The family's affection for these "gentle giants" has grown, and now they own nine of them.

Draft, or draught, in the English spelling, refers to "the act of drawing or pulling." Draft horses combine incredible strength with impressive looks and gentle dispositions. They are taller, stronger, and up to twice the weight of saddle horses. They have wider hooves and backs.

After being seen as outdated 50 years ago, draft horses are making a modest comeback in the US. Horse expert Robbin Miller of Johnson, Vt., calls them "110 percent trustworthy." Drafts can be trained to obey voice commands, so even children can handle them.

Elizabeth, now 14, stands with her gray mare, Daisy, ready to enter the white-fenced arena of a local draft horse show in Johnson. She will compete in obstacle courses, riding contests, and events called halter class (the horse is led) and cart class (the horse pulls a two-wheel cart). Elizabeth hopes to earn some ribbons – maybe even the "Junior Teamster" award, given to the teenager with the most points at the end.

Daisy is a Percheron, a breed developed by the French in the 17th and 18th centuries for army mounts. Descended partly from the elegant Arabian horse, Percherons are intelligent and sleeker than other draft breeds. They were the favorite carriage horses of French kings. Belgian draft horses enter the arena with Daisy. These are the most com-

mon drafts in the US. They are blond and combine great strength with a willingness to work.

Draft horses not present at this show but bred in the US and other countries include Clydesdales, once used in Scotland for farm work and hauling on the streets of Glasgow. They are chestnut-colored with black manes and tails. The old Shire is a huge horse bred in England during medieval times. It was strong enough to carry a 400-pound armored knight into battle. They have "feathers," or long hair on the backs of their lower legs. The smaller Suffolk Punch draft was not bred for war, but used by English farmers to plow clay soil. It is known for its endurance.

Elizabeth leads Daisy into the arena and asks her to stand, trot, and back up. She leaves with a fourth-place ribbon – not bad. Later, Elizabeth's father hitches up two black draft horses for her to drive in a cart class. In this event, pairs of horses are hitched to old-fashioned two-wheel carts. The

child and a parent sit in the cart and drive the horses around the arena, responding to commands like "walk," "trot," and "back." Judging is based on how well the drivers and horses work together.

On the farm, the Flint family's draft horses are used for hauling logs from the forest, collecting maple sap, and riding bareback in the fields. The family also uses their drafts to give hayrides. Elizabeth's favorite activity is driving, or guiding her horse when it pulls a wagon or sled.

"Holding the reins is like holding the steering wheel, the gas pedal, and the brake all at once," she says.

Unlike machines, though, draft horses sense people's feelings. "When I'm upset, I go down to the barn and talk to them," Elizabeth says. "My mare puts her head right around me and hugs me."

What is it like to ride a draft horse? Elizabeth says it's easy to stay on because their backs are so wide. And they're comfortable, her sister Ashley adds, "like a gigantic couch."

At the show, it's time for the 14- to 18-year-olds' cart class. Elizabeth drives her black Percherons into the arena. Their huge polished hooves pound the ground. Their long tails fly in the breeze, and their soft black manes seem to float.

Next, Elizabeth's little sister, Michealla, has a turn. She's only 5, but she slaps the reins with confidence. With her dad beside her, she makes them trot so fast her straw hat flies off.

"Whoa," Michealla shouts, and they stop. "Back," she commands, and they back up. The judge smiles and hands Michealla her hat and a blue ribbon.

Later in the show, the family's favorite draft, Prince, helps Elizabeth win ribbons in races and games. And guess what? She earns enough points to win the "Junior Teamster" award.

## Just how big is a draft horse?

- Height: Up to 6 feet 5 inches at the withers, or the highest part of a horse's back (at the base of the neck)
- Weight: 2,000 pounds or more
- Strength: can pull three times its weight – 6,000 pounds or 3 tons
- Hooves: up to 8 inches or more in diameter – as big as a dinner plate
- Food: a bale of hay (40 pounds) of hay per day, plus grain



## Reflections

# Soulless bodies on display



Alice and I saw the exhibition Body Worlds 2 in Toronto early in January. It's a spectacular display of real human bodies that have been cut open in various ways so you can look into the intricate system we call the human body. The display had been tastefully arranged, and attempts had been made to elevate the mind by hanging banners along the walls that quoted a spiritual or philosophical guru.

One banner quoted from Psalm 8: "What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the angels and crowned him with glory and honor." It was a suitable comment on what we saw that afternoon.

Strangely enough, instead of being horrified, I was moved by the dignity of all the cadavers, who had been placed in various poses and actions. One was skateboarding, another sword fencing, yet another ballet dancing. While in their poses, one could see their genitals, their hearts, their lungs, their stomachs and spleens.

One woman had been cut open to reveal a five-month-old fetus. Her lungs were blackened from smoking. Had she died of lung cancer? She had known that she and her baby would not survive the illness that had struck her, and she had agreed by contract that her body and that of her baby could be used for the kind of exhibition we were seeing. Because the skin had been removed from each body, one could not really tell the identity of the formerly alive people.

Shakespeare's Hamlet was also quoted on a banner: "What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! in form, in moving, how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!" Shakespeare's text resembles Psalm 8 but also departs from it. God is not in the picture, though perhaps hinted at with the reference to angels.



Psalm 8 begins with the humble awareness of our undeserved status under God: what are humans that God takes notice of them, what are we that God cares for us? In spite of that lowly status, God raises us to a place that is a little lower than the one taken up by angels. In Shakespeare's text, human beings are exalted beyond the status of angels when our mind is like that of a god; and then we get a left-handed compliment when Hamlet refers to us as the paragon of animals. It would be anachronistic to suggest that Shakespeare was influenced by a theory of evolution, so maybe we should read "paragon" to mean that we are better than animals?

Whatever Shakespeare had in mind, further into the exhibition human beings are reduced to a mere bundle of sensations. A banner quoted Epikur, a Greek philosopher, who lived from 342 to 271 BC: "Get used to the idea that Death should not matter to us, for good and evil are based on sensation. Death, however, is the cessation of all sensation. Hence, Death, ostensibly the most terrifying of all evils, has no meaning for us, for as long as we exist, Death will not be present. When Death comes, then we will no longer be in existence."

Cold comfort when you look at all these bodies. Why fear death? the philosopher argues, since death is the end of your existence. Here Psalm 8 retreats more and more into the background.

Of course, seeing all these frozen bodies in such a naked state and without any expressions of feeling might make one wonder about the soul. The soul was certainly not on display. One skeleton had everything removed except for the arteries. The process of plastination, invented by the producer behind the exhibition, made such isolation possible. It was amazing to see how many arteries there are in the human body. It was as if a fine red net had been thrown over the skull and torso and limbs. There were thousands of arteries. And it made me think of the challenge that God put to Ezekiel: "Son of man, can these bones [and these arteries] live?"

In the vision, Ezekiel was asked to prophesy to the bones: "Prophesy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! This is what the Sovereign LORD says

to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.'" (Ezekiel 37)

It would have been awesome if the Lord had asked me to prophesy right there in the Toronto Science Centre, and if the following would have taken place: So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.'" So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet – a vast army.

Wow. All of a sudden all these bodies come alive. Their bodies close up and the skin reappears, and they all breathe in deeply and start moving around. And the little baby is growing again in the mother's womb.

I'm not sure whether my prophesying took care of clothing, but I'm sure that the whole exhibition would have gotten a lot closer to Psalm 8 again. Take that, Epikur. Human beings are more than simply bundles of sensations. They are creatures who have been breathed into by God. Take that Shakespeare, or Hamlet, or whoever: We are creatures under God, helpless and of low estate. But God is willing to raise us up.

And some day, he will.

"This is what the Sovereign LORD says: O my people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD."



Gunther von Hagens is a German anatomist who invented the plastination technique to conserve specimens and is heavily involved in its promotion. He developed the Body Worlds exhibition of human bodies and body parts.

Before leaving the exhibition, I looked into the guest book in which visitors were invited to write their comments. One man, I noticed, complained that he had forked out hundreds of dollars (had he paid for a busload of seniors? The entry fee was only \$25.) only to be insulted because there were more male figures than female figures in the exhibition, and most of them had been engaged in a macho sport.

I don't know, maybe Epikur is right. Maybe some of us are just a bundle of sensations, after all.

Former editor of CC, retired but now editing the Christian Educators Journal, preaching the occasional sermon and prodding the local Chr. School board.



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## Classifieds

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## BRITISH COLUMBIA

Burns Lake - CFLD	9:15 am	1400
Osoyoos - CJOR	8:00 am	1490
Prince George - CIRX	7:00 am	94.3
Princeton - CHOR	8:00 am	1400
Smithers - CFBV	9:15 am	1230
Vernon - CJIB	9:30 pm	94

## ALBERTA

Brooks - CIBQ	8:30 am	1340
Edmonton - CJCA	6:00 pm	930

## MANITOBA

Winnipeg - CKJS	9:00 am	810
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## ONTARIO

Atikokan - CFAK	9:30 am	1240
Chatham - CFCO	6:30 am	630
Hamilton - CHAM	7:30 am	820
London - CKSL	7:00 am	1410
Owen Sound - CFOS	7:00 am	560
Sarnia - CHOK	7:30 am	1070
Stratford - CJCS	8:45 am	1240
Wingham - CKNX	10:30 am	920
Woodstock - CJFH	7:30 am	94.03

## NEW BRUNSWICK

Saint John - CHSJ	9:00 am	94.1
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## PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Charlottetown - CFCY	7:00 am	630
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## NOVA SCOTIA

Digby - CKDY	6:00 am	1420
Halifax - CFDR	8:30 am	780
Liverpool - CKBW	7:30 am	94.5
Kentville - CKEN	8:30 am	1490
Middleton - CKAD	8:30 am	1350
Shelburne - CKBW	7:30 am	93.1

## TELEVISION - PRIMARY FOCUS

AB Lethbridge - CJIL Thurs at 9pm.  
TBN (Trinity Broadcasting Network)

## Kids Corner Radio



## ALBERTA

Drayton Valley CIBW	92.9 FM	Sun. 8:30 am
High River/Calgary CHRB	1140 AM	Sun. 4:30pm
Nordegg CHBW	93.9 FM	Sun. 8:30 am
Rocky Mtn. House CHBW	94.5 FM	Sun. 8:30 am

## BRITISH COLUMBIA

Prince Rupert CIAJ	100.7 FM	Sat. 10 am
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## MANITOBA

Altona CFAM	950 AM	Sun. 4 pm
Steinbach CHSM	1250 AM	Sun. 4 pm

## NOVA SCOTIA

Bridgewater CKBW	1000 AM	Sun. 5:30 am
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## ONTARIO

Oshawa CKDO	1350 AM	Sat. 8 am
Woodstock CJFH	94.3 FM	Sat. 8 am

## SASKATCHEWAN

Estevan CJSL	1280 AM	Sun. 7 am
Weyburn CJSL	1190 AM	Sun. 7 am



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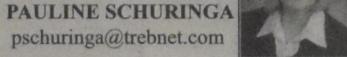
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[www.ccbf.org](http://www.ccbf.org)

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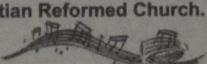
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## Classifieds

Birth	Anniversary	Obituaries
<p>With thanksgiving to our Lord, <b>Mike &amp; Tracy De Weerd (nee Scholten)</b> joyfully announce the safe arrival of</p> <p><b>Richard Michael</b> born Feb. 23, 2006 in Palmerston, Ontario weighing 8 lbs 3 oz. A new little brother for Kaitlyn, Cody and Ryan A grandchild for Jack &amp; Theresa Scholten and John &amp; Mary De Weerd. Another great-grandchild for Alice Van Gyssel and Henry &amp; Lammie Rumph Home address: RR 1, Alma ON N0B 1A0</p>	<p>1956</p>  <p><b>ANDY AND ANN VAN HELVOORT (nee Elzinga)</b></p>	<p><i>Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. Psalm 119:105</i></p> <p>February 23 1925 — February 18 2006 Our Lord in His infinite wisdom, mercy and love, called home:</p> <p><b>JAN NOORDHOF</b></p> <p>Beloved husband of Catharina Kruizinga for 55 years. Loving father of: Arend &amp; Angeline Noordhof, Kerwood, ON Henry &amp; Diana Noordhof, Poplarhill, ON Anthony Noordhof, Strathroy ON Ann &amp; Gee Depont, Mount Brydges, ON Emmy &amp; Aart Pol, Mitchell, ON John Henry Noordhof, Williamsburg, ON 20 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren Dear brother to Lucas Noordhof (Elsie) Strathroy, ON Pre-deceased by 2 grandchildren.</p>
<p>Birthday</p> <p><b>Betty Tijchelaar</b> with family and friends, plans to celebrate her <b>90th birthday</b>, the Lord willing, on March 29th, 2006 and again on April 01, 2006 (you do that when you turn 90!) Betty now resides at Faith Manor, HCH, Room 106, 7900 McLaughlin Rd, Brampton ON L6Y 5A7</p> <p>Betty is still blessed with a strong faith, a wonderful sense of humour and a zest for life, that has seen her through a few health struggles this past year.</p>	<p>2006</p> <p>With joy and thankfulness we celebrate Andy and Ann Van Helvoort's golden <b>50th Wedding Anniversary</b>.</p> <p>You are invited to celebrate this special day with us at an <b>Open House</b>, March 18, 2006 from 2-4 p.m. at the First Christian Reformed Church, 320 Elm Street in St. Thomas, Ontario. <i>Best wishes only please.</i></p> <p>Love from all your children, Betty &amp; Fred, David &amp; Donna, Fred &amp; Laurie, Margaret &amp; Kees, and your grandchildren, Michael, Kaleigh, Nadine, Joshua, Melissa, Gregory, Matthew, Andrew, Mark, Jasmine and Jade.</p>	<p>The Lord took</p> <p><b>HENDRIK VROOM</b></p> <p>a resident of Vineland and formerly of Chatham peacefully at West Lincoln Memorial Hospital, Grimsby on Tuesday February 21, 2006, at the age of 81.</p> <p>Beloved husband of: Hilda Fransen of Vineland and predeceased by his first wife Gatske (Daisy) Vroom (1998).</p> <p>Father to: the late Arne Sr., Jeannette Vroom and John Hobson of Colborne ON, Arne Vroom and Judy of Grand Rapids MI, Pierre Vroom and Tracy of Medicine Hat AB, Neil Vroom of Woodstock ON, Patricia Nieuwema and David of Moscow, Idaho, Hank Vroom and Brenda of Lethbridge AB, Kirsten Vroom of Southwestern Reg. Ctr., Cedar Springs ON, Eric Vroom and Denise of Chatham ON, Chantelle Vroom and Greg of Barrie ON. Pake will be greatly missed by all 17 grandchildren: Rochelle, Eric, Nicholas, Renee', Derrick, Karres, Marita, Tyrel, Joshua, Benjamin, Luke, Chantelle, Asela, Rachel, Kimberlee, Levi, and Jake.</p> <p>Correspondence address: Jeanette Vroom, RR 4, Colborne ON K0K 1S0</p>
<p>Classifieds</p> <p><b>DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION</b> Christian Courier is published on alternate Mondays. Copy deadline for each issue is 9 a.m. Tuesday, 13 days prior to publication date.</p> <p><b>RATE:</b> (GST added to rates listed) All personal and family announcements: \$6.00 per square inch. <a href="mailto:rose@christiancourier.ca">rose@christiancourier.ca</a> Display advertising re. businesses and organizations: \$8.00 per square inch. email: <a href="mailto:ads@christiancourier.ca">ads@christiancourier.ca</a></p> <p><b>PHOTOS:</b> There is a processing fee of \$25 for the inclusion of a photograph with a personal or family announcement.</p> <p><b>PERSONAL ADS:</b> Christian Courier would be pleased to handle your personal ad in an efficient and discreet manner. The cost to set up a personal file under a unique file number is \$25. Ads requesting correspondence with this file are run at \$8 P.I. per insertion. All correspondence is immediately forwarded unopened.</p> <p><b>SUBMITTING YOUR AD</b> Mail: Christian Courier, 1 Hiscott St St. Catharines ON L2R 1C7 fax: 905-682-8313 e-mail: see above</p>	<p>Vacation Rentals</p> <p><b>Bed &amp; Breakfast</b> <i>'Nijenstein'</i></p> <p>Situated just south of Utrecht in a beautiful location, within a short drive's distance from the major cities. The actual accommodation is a lovely cottage located in our garden. In the garden we keep a number of farm animals, and it even contains a 2-hole (par 3) golfcourse. For reservations, contact: Piet and Henny Klomp Nijensteinweg 45 4124 AT Hagestein The Netherlands +31 347 351258 or +31 622543510 Email: <a href="mailto:piet.klomp@freeler.nl">piet.klomp@freeler.nl</a> Website: <a href="http://www.bnbnijenstein.nl">www.bnbnijenstein.nl</a></p> <p><b>Fully furnished apartment in Voorschoten.</b> Sleeps six persons and is only 10 minutes from railway station. 270 euro per week. Available this summer from June 24 till August 11, 2006 Contact at: <a href="mailto:huizingaa@planet.nl">huizingaa@planet.nl</a></p> <p><b>Met vriendelijke groeten</b></p> <p><b>35 FOOT TRAILER</b> at Lakewood Christian Campground. Close to Wyoming, Ont. Sleeps 7. Everything included. Available May - Oct. Call 905-732-6957</p> 	<p>Dedgem, Friesland</p> <p>Psalm 121</p> <p>April 2, 1914</p> <p>On Wednesday, February 22, 2006</p> <p><b>MARTEN KINGMA</b></p> <p>Completed his earthly journey and was promoted to glory at the age of almost 92 years.</p> <p>Lovingly remembered and sadly missed by: His marriage partner for almost 66 years: Antje (nee Peterkamp) His children: Jitske &amp; Geert Horinga, Port Colborne, Ont. Bertha VanderHeide, Ingersoll, Ont. Shirley &amp; Peter Stol, Strathroy, Ont. Marten &amp; Nellie Kingma, London, Ont. Gerry Kingma, Strathroy, Ont. Bert &amp; Diana Kingma, Stoney Creek, Ont. Andrew &amp; Joanne Kingma, Poplar Hill, Ont. 30 grandchildren and 1 with Jesus, 37 great-grandchildren, and 1 great-great-grandchild. Survived by 8 brothers and sisters in The Netherlands, and many, many nephews and nieces. Predeceased by: his parents Gerben &amp; Jitske Kingma and his 2 stepmothers Eelkje &amp; Sjoukje. 2 brothers &amp; 2 sisters.</p> <p>Although we are saddened by his passing, we have the assurance that he is at home with the Lord whom he loved.</p> <p>Funeral service was held at the East Chr. Ref. Church, Strathroy, Ont. on Feb. 27, 2006. Pastor Walter DeRuiter officiated</p> <p>Correspondence address: Antje Kingma, Rm 123, Shalom Manor 12 Bartlett Ave, Grimsby ON L3M 4N5</p> <p><b>DUTCH SERVICE</b></p> <p>April 2, 2006 at 3:00 p.m.</p> <p>Ancaster Christian Reformed Church Rev. Jacob Kuntz will be preaching.</p>
<p>EUROPE &amp; WORLDWIDE</p> <p><b>DCA Travel &amp; Cruise</b></p> <p>Toll-free 1-800-667-2525 E-mail: <a href="mailto:info@dca-travel.com">info@dca-travel.com</a></p> <p>Amsterdam from \$499 + tax • Flights • Cruises • All inclusive Holiday Packages <b>ON SALE</b> <b>TORONTO 416-224-5211</b></p> <p>Best insurance coverage-lowest price. Call today.</p> <p>EUROPE &amp; WORLDWIDE</p> <p><b>DCA Travel &amp; Cruise</b></p>	<p>THE YORK-SIMCOE CRUSADERS MEN'S CHOIR will present an evening of sacred music. <b>March 25 7:30 pm.</b> The program will be held at the <b>Springdale Christian Reformed Church</b>. See the <i>Calendar of Events</i> for more details.</p> 	

## Classifieds / Job Opportunities

### Ministry

#### ASSISTANT PORT CHAPLAIN /MINISTRY DEVELOPER

Since 1965 the Ministry to Seafarers of the Christian Reformed Church in North America has served the seafarers who come to Montreal.

**Starting July 2006** we need a full-time, male, staff person with fluency in English and French. Skill in other languages will be an asset. Operating out of Mariner's House in the old port, this staffer will assist Chaplain Ms Michelle dePooter with visiting ships, and will devote half-time to developing a base for the ministry in the evangelical churches of greater Montreal. Appropriate education and skills are required. The capacity to be ordained as a ministry associate in the CRCNA will be an asset. A detailed job description is available. Please submit resume, academic qualifications, a thorough statement of faith, and salary expectations to our administrator,



Ms. Brenda Dyas,  
min2seaf@colba.net  
or PO Box 815  
Place d'Armes  
Montreal Quebec H2Y 3J2  
Fax 514 849-2874

#### PASTOR OF DEVELOPMENT and EDUCATION

Emmanuel CRC in Calgary, Alberta is seeking a second **full-time pastor** who will be responsible for encouraging, enabling and empowering our ministry leaders as well as building our presence in the community. Send inquiries/resume to Search Committee, at e-mail: [rudygreta@hotmail.com](mailto:rudygreta@hotmail.com) "In Confidence".

#### NELSON AVENUE COMMUNITY CHURCH

a growing multiethnic fellowship of believers, is seeking a **pastor** with strong preaching and teaching skills capable of caring for our diverse congregation and reaching out to our surrounding community of Burnaby, British Columbia.

Send inquiries or resumes to Bill Vanriet, Search Committee Chair, at [nacc.search.committee@gmail.com](mailto:nacc.search.committee@gmail.com)

### Student Financial Aid

The student fund committee of the **Classis Quinte** of the Christian Reformed Church provides **financial help to students preparing for full time ministry** in the Christian Reformed Church.

Applicants may find the link to the application form at <http://www.cobourggrace.org>

Applications may be mailed, emailed or faxed to the chair of the committee, Jack VanderVeer, by March 31, 2006.



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### Education



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- Special Education funding and grant applications
- Coordination and direction of staff

Please forward a resume, a Pastor's reference and statement of faith to:

**David O' Dell, Secondary Principal**  
Pacific Christian Secondary School  
654 Agnes Street, Victoria BC V8Z.2E6  
Phone: (250) 479-4532  
Fax: (250) 479-3511  
Email: [dodell@pacificchristian.ca](mailto:dodell@pacificchristian.ca)

#### CENTENNIAL CHRISTIAN SCHOOL TERRACE, B. C. TEACHING POSITION OPEN

Centennial Christian School invites applications for a definite opening for a High School Math teaching position beginning September 2006. Other possible high school positions in French and other subjects may also be available.

Centennial Christian School is located in the beautiful Pacific Northwest area of British Columbia. Centennial Christian School is an inter-denominational school with a teaching staff of 19 and a support staff of 10, and presently offers Christian education to 200 students in Kindergarten – Grade 12. Please contact the principal or vice principal for further details and send letter of application, resume and other information to:

**Centennial Christian School**  
Curtis Tuininga – Principal  
Edgar Veldman – Vice Principal  
3608 Sparks Street  
Terrace, B. C. V8G 2V6  
Phone (250) 635-6173  
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Willowdale Christian School (WCS) located in Toronto, Ontario, Canada is seeking a

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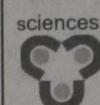
to fill an immediate opening. The successful candidate will have a strong desire to support Christian education, experience with promotion in a Christian environment, strong verbal, written and presentation skills as well as experience working in a team environment with both professionals and volunteers. WCS desires to raise its profile in the Christian school community to increase enrollment. Compensation will be commensurate with experience. A complete job description is available for review on our website [www.willowdalechristianschool.org](http://www.willowdalechristianschool.org). Please email all resumes, in confidence to Mr. Cecil Holtrop [choltrop@gtaa-adp.com](mailto:choltrop@gtaa-adp.com). While we appreciate your interest, only candidates selected for interviews will be contacted.

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Send applications, resumes and references to the principal, **Peter Bulthuis: [pbulthuis@unitychristianhigh.ca](mailto:pbulthuis@unitychristianhigh.ca)**

PH: (705) 792-6915; FAX: (705) 792-2389

750 Essa Rd.,  
Barrie, ON L4N 9E9

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**Associate Director-Human Resources**  
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[rklassen@mutualsupport.net](mailto:rklassen@mutualsupport.net)  
[www.mutualsupport.net](http://www.mutualsupport.net)

See page 22 for Dordt College faculty positions.  
Go to [www.christiancourier.ca](http://www.christiancourier.ca) for job opportunities recently advertised in CC.

## Classifieds



## Dordt College

### Faculty Positions

Dordt College is seeking applications in the following areas:

**August 2006**

#### Business Administration Faculty (Possible Openings)

Introductory and advanced-level courses. Candidates with interest in Human Resources or Economics or Accounting are particularly encouraged to apply.

#### Communication (Possible Opening)

Teach introductory courses, public relations, and organizational communication.

#### Nursing Faculty

Teach selected BSN completion courses; course development opportunities in the areas of Family, Community and Public Health and Professional Practice development. Master's degree and current license or eligibility for licensure as professional nurse in Iowa required.

#### Psychology Faculty (Possible Opening)

Teach introductory and upper-level courses. Speciality is open, but some preference is given to applicants interested in teaching statistics or research courses.

#### Social Work Faculty, Director of Field Education

Teach in all areas of generalist BSW program; direct and coordinate BSW field education program. MSW and a minimum of 2 years post-MSW experience required; social work field practicum and supervision experience preferred.

#### Special Education Faculty (Possible Opening)

Ed.D or Ph.D preferred. Possible teaching assignments include combinations of K-12 curriculum and instruction courses.

**August, 2007**

#### Criminal Justice

Teach in an interdisciplinary criminal justice program. Qualified applicants should have a background in such areas as criminal justice, criminology, sociology, or related field. Completed applications should be submitted by February 1, 2007 for full consideration.

To learn more about a position and receive application materials, qualified persons committed to a Reformed, biblical perspective and educational philosophy are encouraged to send a letter of interest and curriculum vita/resume to:

Dr. Rockne McCarthy  
Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Dordt College  
498 4<sup>th</sup> Ave. NE  
Sioux Center, IA 51250-1697

Facsimile: 712 722-4496  
E-mail: vpaa@dordt.edu  
Web site: www.dordt.edu/offices/academic\_affairs

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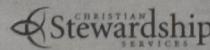
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#### The Liberation Choir in Concert

Friday April 7 @ 7.30 p.m. with the students of Holland Marsh District Christian School Springdale CRC, 1351 River Road, Bradford, Ontario For tickets please call 905 775 3701

Saturday April 8 @ 7.30 p.m. with Living Rock Ministries held at Central Presbyterian Church, 150 Charlton Ave (corner of Caroline and Charlton) Hamilton Ontario. Tickets: \$15.00 For tickets please call 905 528 7625. www.livingrock.ca



## Events/Advertising

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**Mar 24** The Woodstock Dutch Theatre Groep presents "Gasten in Eigen Huis" 8 p.m. at Heritage Christian School, **Jordan**. See ad this issue for more details.

**Mar 25** The York-Simcoe Crusaders Men's Choir will present an evening of sacred music. As a special feature for the evening, the York Region Children's Chorus from Aurora will join us. Each choir will have their own presentation and a number of selections will be sung together. The program will begin at 7:30 at the Springdale Christian Reformed Church. Tickets are \$10.00 and children under 12 are free.

**Apr 2** Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. Jacob Kuntz will be preaching.

**Apr 7** The **Liberation Choir** in Concert with the students of Holland Marsh District Christian School on Friday at 7:30 p.m. Springdale Christian Reformed Church, 1351 River Road, **Bradford**, Ont. For tickets please call 905 775 3701

**Apr 7-9** Reformed Marriage Encounter Weekend at the Travel Lodge **Kingston**. For more information or to register call: Jamie and Wilma Kuyk 905-987-4272 or E-mail [james.kuyk@sympatico.ca](mailto:james.kuyk@sympatico.ca)

**Apr 8** The **Liberation Choir** and Living Rock Ministries team up for a Benefit Concert on Saturday 7:30 p.m. Central Presbyterian Church, 150 Charlton Ave (corner of Caroline and Charlton) **Hamilton** Ont. Tickets: \$15.00 ea. For tickets please call 905 528 7625. [www.livingrock.ca](http://www.livingrock.ca)

**Apr. 29** Georgetown District Christian School's 40th Anniversary GALA dinner & Silent Auction Reception: 6:00pm Dinner: 7:00pm RSVP by Apr. 7, 2006 to Dawn Kalsbeek 905-873-9966 or [mkalsbeek@cogeco.ca](mailto:mkalsbeek@cogeco.ca) See ad this issue for more information.

**May 6, 7** Grace CRC, **Coburg**, 50th anniversary. All invited to join in celebrations. Bileting available. Call 905-372-3642 or email: [grace.church@bellnet.ca](mailto:grace.church@bellnet.ca). Website: [www.courbourgrace.org](http://www.courbourgrace.org)

**May 6** Combined 85 voices by the "Crescendo" Male Choir, St. Thomas and The Ottawa Carleton Male Choir present a "Concert of Sacred Song and Music". Special guest soloist Renee Stalenhoef, soprano. Saturday evening at 7:30 p.m. St. Paul's Congregational Church, 450 Park Ave. **Chatham** Tickets \$10.00. Advance: 351-7151 or at the door. Information: (519) 637-4357.

**May 7** Combined 85 voices by the "Crescendo" Male Choir, St. Thomas and The Ottawa Carleton Male Choir present a "Concert of Sacred Song and Music". Special guest soloist Renee Stalenhoef, soprano. Sunday evening at 7:30 p.m. Knox Presbyterian Church, 55 Hincks Street, **St. Thomas**. Freewill offering for the Canadian Bible Society. Information: (519) 637-4357.

**May 12,13** Jarvis District Christian School, 50th anniversary. On Friday evening – dinner and an evening program. Tickets available from February 15 to March 31, 2006. Seating is limited. Payment of \$50.00 per ticket must accompany order. Various activities are planned for Saturday concluding with a service of Thanksgiving at the neighbouring CRC at 7:00 p.m. For more information visit [www.jdcs.ca](http://www.jdcs.ca) and to purchase tickets contact Marcia Cota (519)587-3111.

**Oct 27-29** Hamilton District Christian High School 50th anniversary weekend. For information about activities or to register as alumni: [www.hdch.org](http://www.hdch.org) or 905.648.6655

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An opportunity to donate to GDSC will be provided during the evening.

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# Evangelicals and foreign policy

Howard LaFranchi

WASHINGTON When US President Bush recently used a public forum to announce his support for a more robust international intervention in Sudan's Darfur region — catching even some of his senior aides off guard — it was yet another milestone for the rising interest of Christian evangelicals in US foreign policy.

In just a few years, conservative Christian churches and organizations have broadened their political activism from a near-exclusive domestic focus to an emphasis on foreign issues.

As Mr. Bush gave his attention to Darfur, one of the world's most high-profile humanitarian crises, he was almost certainly cheered not just by a coterie of evangelical advisers, but also the sizable Christian right constituency. But his focus on a forlorn region of Africa suggests deeper shifts in the forces influencing US foreign policy.

Even as many in Washington trumpet the return of realism to US foreign policy and the decline of the neoconservative hawks, the staying power of the evangelicals is likely to blunt what might otherwise have been a steep decline in Wilsonian ideals.

Indeed, the aftermath of Iraq has some historians predicting a bout of American isolationism similar to what occurred after Vietnam. But other analysts say that with so many conservative Christians now convinced of activism in foreign affairs, old patterns of periodic introspection have been broken.

"Without a determined constituency pressuring for engagement in international affairs, it would be likely that — given the difficulties in Iraq — you would have had the administration hunkering down a bit, and the American people with them," says Allen Hertzke, an expert and noted author on religion in US foreign policy at the University of Oklahoma in Norman. "But instead, you have these substantial forces pushing on human rights causes and demanding intervention."

Some note that because the evangelicals' foreign-policy interests are motivated by religious convictions and not a temporary cause, the movement has deeper roots. "These people are not flavor-of-the-month types," says Mark Palmer, a former diplomat focused on democratization and now vice chairman of Freedom House in Washington. "The fact they are so involved now will be a factor in us not becoming isolationist."

A recent survey by the Pew Research



Darfur refugees waiting for help.

Center, which periodically gauges public views on America's place in the world, finds an upswing in the percentage of Americans who agree that the "US should mind its own business internationally." But the trend would be even stronger without the evangelical conversion to global involvement, some experts believe.

Behind the most recent evidence of evangelical influence in US foreign policy — the renewed calls for stronger intervention in Darfur — stands Michael Gerson, who is a Bush policy adviser and speechwriter (and who helped coin the "axis of evil" phrase). The former journalist, who is also a member of an evangelical Episcopal church in suburban Virginia, is seen as one of the driving forces behind Bush's emphasis on a global spread of what the president sees as God-given rights.

So far Bush's call for a considerably larger foreign peacekeeping presence in Darfur — under the United Nations and with beefed-up involvement by NATO — has not been answered by the international community. The effort endured a setback this week when the month-long American presidency of the UN Security Council expired without Council action.

The government of Sudan is lobbying against a UN force on its soil, arguing it would constitute a recolonization of the country, according to UN officials.

But Darfur is hardly the first foreign rallying cause for evangelical Christians. In fact, their awakening to foreign-policy issues began well before the Bush White House, analysts note.

"One place it started was during the efforts to open up the former Soviet Union" in the 1980s, says John O'Sullivan, a foreign-policy analyst and

editor at large of *National Review*. "They looked at the success of the Jewish community in helping the Soviet Jews and said, 'We have done nothing to help our co-religionists in Africa and Korea and other parts.'"

From there came a string of diplomatic initiatives bearing the stamp of evangelical influence — and largely engineered through the halls of Congress, notes Mr. Hertzke. Congress passed the International Religious Freedom Act in 1998, which makes freedom of religion and conscience a "core objective" of US foreign policy. It also established an office and an annual international religious-freedom report that grades countries on rights.

Subsequent initiatives include legislation in 2000 that targets human trafficking and sex trafficking; the Sudan Peace Act of 2002, which among other things established a certification process for periodic review of Sudan's peace efforts; and the North Korea Human Rights Act of 2004. The influence of evangelical Christians is also seen in the Bush administration's focus on AIDS in Africa, as well as in attacks on international family-planning activities, experts say.

But it was the North Korea initiative that first prompted foreign-policy analysts to take notice. Michael Horowitz, a prominent protagonist of the involvement of conservative faith-based organizations in foreign policy, called the North Korea act a "miracle" wrought by evangelicals. But some experts pointed to the large number of Korean-American Christians and their activist pastors as a larger factor in the act's passage.

Howard LaFranchi is a writer for The Christian Science Monitor

## News briefs

### Chocolate mystery

Good news for all you who have not been able to resist your addiction to chocolate. That is true of a lot of those of Dutch ancestry. A study of aging Dutchmen suggests that those who ignored past warnings against indulging their taste for that most sinful of all treats were actually building resistance to disease. Cocoa consumers in the study were half as likely to die from disease than those who did not eat the sweet treat.

The study involved nearly 1,000 Dutch men between 65 and 84 years of age, grouping them into three categories: those who ate little chocolate, a modest amount, and the most. Those who ate the most had a lower average blood pressure and their overall risk of cardiovascular or any other disease was lowered by as much as 50 percent.

The scientists offered some speculations, but conceded that the exact mechanism by which chocolate helps remains a mystery. That strikes me as a wonderful combination — chocolate and mystery.

### Church and friendship

For those of you who don't like chocolate, don't despair. Another study involving over 500 Christians with an average age of 76, who went to church more than twice a year, were compared with 238 people who did not go to church as frequently. It found that church involvement buffers the effects of stress on your life, thus contributing to a longer life.

Want the best of both worlds? Get rid of the peppermints and eat chocolate in church.

Oh yes, and share some with a friend. A study of twins indicated that those who met often with friends were more likely to live longer.

Strangely, women were especially aided by having close ties with friends. The men who had just as many contacts as the women in the study didn't seem to gain more longevity.

Maybe the men weren't sharing their chocolate. I guess male bonding isn't all it's cracked up to be. Or maybe the men got into arguments about theology and that sent their blood pressure sky high.

### Happy as a conservative

Here's another study done in the U.S. A survey by the Pew Research Center shows that conservatives are happier than liberals no matter what their income. About 34 percent of all Americans called themselves "very happy," but only 28 percent of liberal Democrats (and 31 percent of moderate or conservative Democrats) did. But a whopping 47 percent of conservative Republicans said they were very happy.

I wondered when the poll was taken, but according to the folks at Pew, this pattern has held steady since the first one taken in 1972.

I always thought conservatives felt that the good old days were in the distant past when men were men and women home cooking. And aren't liberals supposed to possess a sunny belief in the goodness of all? George Will, a conservative commentator, points to the paradox: conservatives are happier than liberals because they are more pessimistic. Hence, they aren't as frustrated as liberals when things don't turn out as expected or hoped.